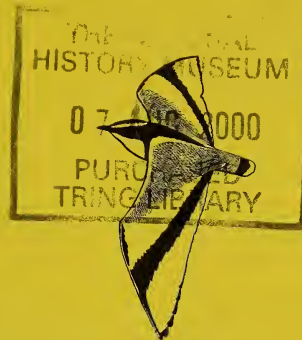


African Bird Club



Bulletin of the African Bird Club

Vol 6 No 2 September 1999

St Helena Wirebird

**Golden-bellied
Woodpecker in
Ivory Coast**

**Breeding biology
of Raso Lark**

**Red-billed Dwarf
Hornbill in Bénin**

**Kilum-Ijim Forest
Project, Cameroon**

**Ayres' Hawk-Eagle
in Cameroon**

**Birding Africa's
basement**

**Ankober Serin
range extension**

**Birds of Namuli,
Mozambique**

**Greater Spotted
Eagle in Tanzania**





African Bird Club

The African Bird Club aims to:

- provide a worldwide focus for African ornithology
- encourage an interest in the conservation of the birds of the region
- liaise with and promote the work of existing regional societies
- publish a twice-yearly colour bulletin
- encourage observers to visit lesser known areas of the region
- encourage observers to actively search for globally threatened and near-threatened species
- develop a Conservation Research Fund

Registered Charity No 1053920

ABC Web site

<http://www.africanbirdclub.org>

ABC Council

Phil Atkinson (Chairman), Keith Betton, Jacquie Bridges, Richard Butler (Meetings Officer), Mark Catterall, Stan Davies, John Farnsworth (Publications Officer), Moira Hargreaves, Paul Lascelles, Rob Lucking, Vicki Lucking, Bill Quantrill (Secretary), Rowena Quantrill (Sales Officer), Geoff Randall (Vice-Chairman), Alan Wilkinson, Alan Williams (Treasurer) and John Wyatt. **President: Martin Woodcock**

Bulletin Editorial Team

Guy Kirwan (Managing Editor), Mark Andrews, Phil Atkinson, Ron Demey, Frank Hawkins, Lincoln Fishpool, Peter Lack, Rob Lucking, Rodney Martins, Peter Robertson, Roger Safford and Tony Stones.

Membership of the ABC

Membership of the ABC is open to all and costs, per annum, UK£15 *Individual (Africa & Europe)*, UK£17 *Individual (Rest of the World)*, UK£18 *Family (Africa & Europe)*, UK£20 *Family (Rest of the World)*, UK£8 *Student (Africa & Europe)*, UK£10 *Student (Rest of the World)*, UK£25 *Libraries/Institutions*, UK£25 minimum *Supporting Member*, or UK£300 *Life Member*. To join or for further details please write to the Membership Secretary, African Bird Club, c/o BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girtton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA, UK.

The Bulletin of the African Bird Club

The *Bulletin of the ABC* provides a forum for news, letters, notices, recent publications, preliminary expedition results, reviews and preliminary or interim publication of studies on African birds by contributors from all parts of the world. Publication of interim

results in the *Bulletin of the ABC* does not preclude publication of final results as journal papers either by the ABC or elsewhere. No material should, however, be submitted simultaneously to the *Bulletin of the ABC* and to any other publication.

Notes for Contributors

The ABC welcomes original contributions on all aspects of the birds of Africa. Africa is here defined as the area covered by Collar, N.J. & Stuart, S.N. 1985. *Threatened birds of Africa and related islands: the ICBP/IUCN Red Data Book*, Part 1. Cambridge: International Council for Bird Preservation, namely continental Africa, Indian Ocean islands west of 80°E, eg Madagascar, the Mascarene Islands and Socotra; Atlantic Ocean islands on or east of the mid-Atlantic ridge, eg the Tristan da Cunha group, the Azores and the Canaries.

Contributions will be accepted subject to editing and refereeing by independent referees, where appropriate. The material published is divided into *Papers*, *Short Notes*, *News & Comment*, *Discoveries*, *Reviews*, *Literature Gleanings*, *Recent Reports* and *Letters*. The Editorial Team will be happy to advise authors on the acceptability of material at draft stage if desired.

Submissions

Two copies of contributions should be submitted. Typewritten manuscripts should have double-spaced lines, on one side of the paper only, with wide margins all round. Clear handwritten manuscripts are also acceptable. All submissions will be acknowledged.

Contributions will be accepted in English or French: French summaries, as well as table and figure captions, will be printed for all major papers published in English, and vice versa. Those submitting major papers should supply a summary for translation

into English, or French, as appropriate.

If possible, please submit your contribution on floppy disk and state computer (eg IBM compatible PC, Macintosh) and word-processing package (eg Word, WordPerfect) used: please note that Amstrad PCW disks are not acceptable.

When you send your contribution on disk, please do not key anything in ALL CAPS (ie with the CAPS LOCK key depressed) unless the combination always occurs in that form (eg 'USA'). Do not use the carriage return key at the end of lines, and do not right justify the margins. When formatting tables use one tab, and not spaces, between each column. Please always send two hard (printed) copies in addition.

Preferred names

With the current instability over worldwide lists of bird names, authors are requested to follow those used in *Birds of Africa* Vols 1-5. For species not yet covered, please use appropriate regional handbooks and checklists eg Roberts for Southern Africa, Britton for East Africa. Deviation from such works should be noted and the reasons given. The Editorial Team will keep abreast of changes in nomenclature and when an agreed list of African names is available, will consider switching to follow it.

Unless a sketch map is provided as part of the article, the names of places should, if possible, follow those on standard or readily available maps.

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Club News



ABC membership

Membership at the end of May 1999 stood at 1,170—a 5% increase on the figure at the same time last year, but still some way short of the total at the end of 1998, when it topped 1,300 for the first time. There are over 200 members from last year who have not yet renewed their membership for 1999. If you know of any members who may have overlooked their renewal please encourage them to continue their support for the Club.

Supported and affiliated membership categories

The Supporting Members scheme is a key part of the Club's strategy of encouraging the spread of knowledge and understanding of birds as widely as possible throughout Africa. The scheme enables Africans who would not otherwise have the resources to join, to become members of the Club. The scheme is funded by Supporting Members who pay a minimum of UK£25 to cover their own membership and the subscription of at least one African member. The money they contribute over and above their own subscription is placed in a special fund which is used to cover the membership expenses of African members whom they may have nominated, or who have been nominated by other Club members.

Although we have suggested a minimum of UK£25 to become a Supporting Member, any contribution is welcome. All members of the Club, even if they do not feel able to become Supporting Members themselves, are invited to nominate candidates for supported memberships. Candidates should be nationals of an African country with a genuine interest in wild birds but without the resources to become members in their own right. Africans who think they may qualify are very welcome to put their own names forward, supported by a letter of recommendation from someone such as their employer, teacher or an officeholder in a local wildlife organisation.

The scheme now also includes Clubs who wish to be affiliated with the African Bird Club in African countries where it is difficult for local individuals to become members in their own right. Clubs accepted for membership under the Scheme receive up to six copies of each issue of the Bulletin for circulation among their members. Instead of paying a membership

fee, Clubs are asked to provide a short annual report on their activities which may be published in the Bulletin. Clubs interested in becoming Affiliated Member Clubs are invited to apply to the ABC Secretary giving details of their membership, their constitution or a statement of their objectives and conditions of their membership, and their activities to date.

ABC e-mailing list

With our membership scattered in over 60 countries, e-mail provides a quick, convenient and inexpensive means of maintaining contact with our members. We now have e-mail addresses for c25% of the membership, but are sure many other members' addresses are not in the Club's records. If you have not already done so, please let the Club Secretary know your e-mail address by e-mailing: wquantrill@msn.com. At the same time, please let the Secretary know if you are willing for your address to be added to the general Club mailing list. As well as using e-mail to communicate with members individually, a general Club mailing list has been compiled, used for sending messages to the membership collectively. The addresses on this list are confidential and not divulged to any outside individual or organisation, and will not be used for commercial purposes. Members are welcome to use this list to circulate their own requests for information or advice, identification queries etc, but not, of course, to send commercial messages. If you have a query or request that you would like to address to the membership please let the Secretary know, either by e-mail at the address given above, or if you do not have e-mail, by post to the Club's usual postal address.

ABC information service update

ABC recently launched a new service to help members with information requests. Perhaps you are planning a trip to Africa and need local advice, or maybe you are in search of an obscure fact about an African species. The Club does not guarantee to find all of the answers, but will try to help. The service is free to ABC members. Contact Keith Betton, who is also the custodian of ABC's journal library: Keith Betton, 8 Dukes Close, Folly Hill, Farnham, Surrey GU9 0DR, UK. Tel: +44 1252 724068. Fax: +44-171 637 5626. E-mail: kbetton@abta.co.uk.

2000 London meeting and AGM

The Club's 2000 London meeting and AGM will be held at the School of Oriental and African Studies, Russell Square, London, on Saturday 4 March 2000. Details of the speakers, AGM programme and how to reach the venue will be posted to members early in 2000.

In order to save on the considerable postal costs involved, Council proposes to send the AGM programme only to those members based in the UK. The minutes of the AGM are published in the following bulletin. Overseas members who wish to receive the AGM agenda should notify the Club secretary via the Club's address or by e-mail: wquantrill@msn.com.

ABC autumn meeting

On Saturday 25 September, ABC will hold a joint meeting with the Norfolk Bird Club at Blakeney Village Hall, Norfolk. The meeting starts at 19.30 hr when light refreshments will be available. Rob Lucking from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and ABC Conservation officer will present an illustrated talk: Fodies, frigates and fairies—birds and their conservation in the Seychelles.

1999 London meeting and AGM

This year's London meeting was successfully staged at the School of Oriental and African Studies, Russell Square, London. The audience was treated to some fascinating presentations, by Rod Martins on birds of the Cape Verdes and Mark Cocker on the relationship between birds and local culture in Bénin and Cameroon. Finally, Hazel Thomson talked on the genus *Picathartes* with some particularly compelling video footage of White-necked *Picathartes P. gymnocephalus*.

ABC Representative Scheme

The following is the current list of ABC Representatives:

Australia: Alan McBride, PO Box 190, Newport Beach, NSW 2106. Fax: 2 9973 2306. E-mail: mcbird@zip.com.au.

Austria: Remo Probst, Radetzkystr. 21/11, A-1030, Vienna. E-mail: remo@zoo.univie.ac.at.

Botswana: Chris Brewster, Matshegke Hill School, Private Bag 24, Bobonong. Tel: 819272. Fax: 819544.

Canary Islands: Tony Clarke, c/o Republica Dominicana, No 61, Barrio de

Fatima, 38500 Guimar, Tenerife, Canary Islands. E-mail: clarke@arrakis.es

Cameroon O'Kah Ebwekoh Monya, Mount Cameroon Project, PO Box 437, Limbe.

Canada: Antonio Salvadori, 17 Colborn Street, Guelph, Ontario N1G 2M4. E-mail: rosella@snowwhite.cis.uoguelph.ca.

Denmark: Lars Dinesen, Sjællandsgade 37, 3 tv., 2200 Copenhagen N. Tel/Fax: 35 36 71 64. E-mail: regulus@inet.uni-c.dk.

Egypt: Sherif and Mindy Baha El Din, 3 Abdalla El Katib St. Apt. 3, Dokki, Cairo. Tel/Fax: 3608160. E-mail: 103257.155+@compuserve.com.

Ethiopia: Ato Yilma Dellelegn and Ato Mengistu Wondafrash, Ethiopian IBA Programme, Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society, PO Box 60074, Addis Ababa.

France: Bob and Françoise Dowsett, 12 rue des Lavandes, Ganges, F-34190. E-mail: Dowsett@aol.com.

Finland: Annika Forsten, Hantverkareg. 14 D 9, FIN-20100 Abo. Tel: 40 5150510. E-mail: aforsten@aton.abo.fi.

Gabon: Patrice Christy, BP 2240, Libreville, Gabon. Fax: c/o ECOFAC, 775534.

Ghana: Samuel Kofi Nyame, Ghana Wildlife Society, PO Box 13252, Accra.

Hungary: Ákos Hivekovics, 10 Zrínyi Street, H-8756 Nagyrécsce. E-mail: falco@nt.ktg.gau.hu.

Italy: Giuseppe Micali, Via Savona 71, Milano MI 1-20144. E-mail: GMicali@USCCMAIL.bms.com.

Kenya: Colin Jackson, c/o Dept of Ornithology, National Museum of Kenya, PO Box 49658, Nairobi.

Madagascar: Frank Hawkins, World Wide Fund for Nature, BP 738, Antananarivo 101. Tel: 2 34885 (work), 2 31622 (home). E-mail: mesite@bow.dts.mg.

Morocco: Jacques Franchimont, Dept. Biologie, Faculté des Sciences de Meknes, B P 4010, Beni M'Hamed 50003, Meknes. E-mail: gomac@extra.net.ma.

Namibia: Chris Hines, PO Box 22527, Windhoek.

São Tomé and Príncipe: Angus Gascoigne, CP 289, São Tomé. Fax: 23912 23406.

Seychelles: Adrian Skerrett, Shipping House, PO Box 336, Victoria, Mahé. Fax: 322978. E-mail: maheship@seychelles.net. Or askerret@uk.packardbell.org.

South Africa: Deon Coetzee, PO Box 782937, Sandton, 2146. Fax: 011 884 2739. Tel: 082 490 1212. Steve Evans, PO Box 505, Ngodwana, 1209. Tel: 734 4973.

Switzerland: Matthias Kestenholz, Mattweid 30, 6204 Sempach. E-mail:

kestenm@ominst.ch

Tanzania: Maurus Msuha, PO Box 70919, Dar es Salaam.

The Gambia: Clive Barlow, The Atlantic Hotel, PO Box 296, Banjul. Fax: 227861.

Uganda: Prof. Derek Pomeroy, Makerere University Institute of the Environment and Natural Resources, PO Box 7298, Kampala.

USA (West coast): Joe Thompson, 4070 Sea View Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90065. E-mail: jthom1956@aol.com.

Zambia: Pete Leonard, PO Box 630025, Choma, Zambia. Fax: 0 32 20621. E-mail: pleonard@zamnet.zm.

Zimbabwe: John Paxton, Ornithological Association of Zimbabwe, PO Box CY161, Causeway. Fax: 2634 794614. E-mail: birds@harare.iafrica.com.

The ABC Representative scheme aims to support existing members by providing a local point of contact in their region, for example, to answer queries to the Club, to solicit submissions for the Bulletin, and possibly to arrange meetings for local members. Existing ABC members can contact their local Representatives in the first instance with queries relating to the Club. ABC Representatives help to recruit new members in their region, for example, by distributing ABC posters and arranging local advertising. In Africa, ABC Representatives help to identify opportunities to invest the ABC Conservation Fund and candidates for the Supported Membership scheme.

The Club aims to appoint many further ABC Representatives. If you are interested in supporting and promoting ABC in your region please contact the Club at our postal address or contact our newly appointed Representative scheme coordinator Vicki Lucking directly by e-mail: Rob&Vic@lucking.free-online.co.uk.

ABC sales items

The following items are currently available from ABC Sales.

1. ABC Sweatshirt featuring an embroidered ABC logo and 'African Bird Club Working for Birds in Africa'; black, navy or bottle-green. Sizes: medium, large, extra large and extra-extra large: UK£20.
2. ABC Polo shirt featuring an embroidered ABC logo and 'African Bird Club. Working for Birds in Africa', forest green. Sizes: small and medium only: UK£12.50.
3. ABC T-shirt featuring African Rollers by Mark Andrews, white. Sizes: large and extra large: UK£11.
4. ABC T-shirt featuring Turacos, white. Sizes: extra large only: UK£9.

5. ABC T-shirt featuring an Egyptian Plover by Martin Woodcock, white. Size: medium only: UK£10.
6. ABC caps featuring an embroidered ABC logo; black, bottle green, red, maroon, navy and grey: UK£7.
7. ABC enamel badge featuring a Slender-billed Curlew design: UK£1.
8. ABC car and telescope stickers: UK£1.
9. Embroidered sew-on badge, featuring ABC logo: UK£4.
10. ABC bone-china mugs: two designs featuring Camine Bee-eater or Golden-breasted Starlings by Martin Woodcock: UK£7 or UK£12 a pair.
11. Pen, printed with 'African Bird Club' and ABC logo: UK£0.50.
12. Pencil, printed with 'African Bird Club' and ABC logo: UK£0.25.
13. White-winged Apalis A4 colour print by Nik Borrow from *Bull. ABC* 2 (2): signed and numbered limited edition of 50 at UK£10; also available unsigned at UK£3.50.
14. Nightjar A4 colour prints by Martin Woodcock from *Bull. ABC* 2 (2): one print illustrates Mountain and Rwenzori Nightjars, the second depicts Black-shouldered and Fiery-necked Nightjars: UK£3.50 each.
15. Pair of Nightjar A4 colour prints by Martin Woodcock, mounted: UK£15 each.
16. Locally designed cards on hand-made paper, produced by the paper making co-operative of the BirdLife International-supported Kilum Mountain Forest Project in Cameroon. A selection of five cards in a hand-woven wallet: UK£5.
17. Self-adhesive 're-use envelope' labels featuring ABC logo: UK£1 for 10.
18. *Bull. ABC*, volume 1, 1994, number 1 and 2: UK£5 each.
19. *Bull. ABC*, volume 2, 1995, number 1 and 2: UK£6 each.
20. *Bull. ABC*, volume 3, 1996, number 1 and 2: UK£6 each.
21. *Bull. ABC*, volume 4, 1997, number 1 and 2: UK£7 each.
22. *Bull. ABC*, volume 5, 1998, number 1 and 2: UK£7 each.
23. Azores Trip Report, Sept–Oct 1997 by Willem Steenge and Theo Bakker: UK£6.
24. Cameroon Trip Report, Dec 1994–Jan 1995 by Richard Webb: UK£6.
25. Cameroon Trip Report, Mar–Apr 1997 by Jon Hombuckle: UK£4.
26. Cape Verde Trip Report, Mar 1996 by Theo Bakker and Klaas van Dijk: UK£6.50.
27. Ethiopia Trip Report, Dec 1995–Jan 1996

- by Richard Webb: UK£7.50.
28. Ethiopia Trip Report, Oct–Nov 1996 by Jon Hombuckle: UK£4.
 29. Ethiopia Trip Report by Julian Francis: UK£10.
 30. Ethiopia/Entrea Trip Report, Mar–May 1998 by David Murdoch: UK£3.
 31. Birding Ghana, Feb 1996 by Mindy and Sherif El Din: UK£6.50.
 32. Ghana Trip Report, Jan–Feb 1997 by Simon Plat. 35 pages: UK£4.
 33. Ivory Coast by public transport trip report, Jan–Feb 1995 by Eddie Williams: UK£4.
 34. Kenya Trip Report, Feb–Mar 1995 by Mike Hunter and Graham Speight: UK£8.
 35. Madagascar and the Comoros, Oct–Nov 1995 by Jon Hombuckle: UK£4.
 36. Madagascar, Nov–Dec 1997 by Chris Bell, Mike Hunter, Dawn Ross and Malcolm Roxby: UK£3.
 37. Madagascar (with Mauritius and Réunion, winter 1997–98 by Brian Gee: UK£9).
 38. Madagascar Trip Report by Paul Noakes: UK£5.
 39. Malawi, Mar 1997 by Jon Hombuckle: UK£3.
 40. Malawi and the Luangwa Valley (Zambia, Jul–Aug 1997 by Henk Hendriks: UK£8.
 41. Namibia and the Cape, Nov 1994 by Jon Hombuckle: UK£4.
 42. Eastern South Africa and Zimbabwe, Feb–Mar 1997 by Jon Hombuckle: UK£5.
 43. Voyage Naturaliste au Cape Provinces d'Afrique du Sud, Sep–Oct 1997 par Georges et Mireille Oliosio: UK£6.
 44. Usambara Mountains, Tanzania, Jan–Feb 1996 by Eddie Williams: UK£4.50.
 45. Uganda Trip Report, Jun–Aug 1995 by Henk Hendriks: UK£6.50.
 46. Wakkerstroom Bird and Nature Guide, by Warwick and Michèle Tarboton: UK£6.
 47. Birdwatch Zimbabwe, 1991, by Derek Solomon and Jacko Williams: UK£7.

Postage and packing: please send UK£2 for each UK order, and UK£3 for each overseas surface mail order. For overseas airmail please add UK£1.50 for each item ordered.

Orders: payments should be made in pounds sterling by cheque/postal order (payable to African Bird Club) or credit card. Full credit card details are required, please specify: Visa, Access, Mastercard or Eurocard; card number; cardholder's name (as it appears on card); cardholder's address; expiry date; cardholder's signature; and amount payable. Please be sure to specify your name and address and the full details of your order including quantity, with size and colour where applicable.

Please send your order to African Bird Club, c/o BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Giron Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA, United Kingdom. Enquiries may also be sent to ABC sales officer, Moira Hargreaves, at the Club's address or e-mail: Moira.Y.Hargreaves@btinternet.com.

ABC Corporate Sponsorship

Under the terms of the Corporate Sponsorship scheme a minimum payment of UK£300 entitles a sponsor to benefits under the scheme for a five-year period. Corporate sponsors are entitled to a full page advertisement in two bulletins during the five years and can also use the Club's corporate sponsorship logo in their adverts and stationery. Contributions under the scheme are allocated directly to the ABC Conservation Fund. Any company or individual with enquiries or suggestions concerning the scheme should write to Moira Hargreaves at the Club's address or e-mail: Moira.Y.Hargreaves@btinternet.com.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to BirdLife International for the use of their offices as a mailing address, Alcedo Publishing of Colorado Springs, USA, and Crowes of Norwich, UK, for their assistance in producing the bulletin. ?

African Bird Club—summary statement of accounts at 31 December 1998

Income and Expenditure Account—year to 31 December 1998

Main Account	1998	1997
Income		
Subscriptions	16844	14453
Other revenue	2795	2193
Donations and Sponsorship (see Note)	-	1791
Bank and Building Society Interest	750	439
	20389	18876
Less:		
Bulletin costs (including postage)	13120	10591
Income before expenses	7269	8285
Expenses		
General expenses—stationery, telephone, meeting costs etc	4400	3606
Participation at IOC	795	-
Finance costs—bank charges, depreciation, accountancy etc	1050	1085
Total expenses	6245	4691
Conservation awards (see Note)	-	1305
Surplus for year	1024	2289
<u>Conservation Account</u> (see Note)		
Income		
Donations and sponsorship	1249	
Profit on Sales of Club merchandise	1197	
Total income	2446	
Expenditure		
Conservation awards made in year	2290	
Balance for year carried forward	156	

Balance Sheet at 31 December 1998

Fixed Assets	
Equipment	732
Current Assets	
Stock of goods for resale	4078
Bank and Building Society Balances	21583
	<u>25661</u>
Less:	
Current Liabilities	
Subscriptions paid in advance	6945
Life memberships	4860
Sundry creditors	384
	<u>12189</u>
Net current assets	13472
Total assets	<u>14204</u>
Represented by:	
Accumulated Fund brought forward	5024
Surplus for year	1024
Conservation Fund brought forward	8000
Conservation Fund balance for year	156
	<u>14204</u>

Note: £8000 was set aside at the end of 1997 to form the Conservation Fund. Profits on sales of Club merchandise and income from donations and sponsorship are now added to this fund, but were previously included in the general account.

Minutes of the Fifth AGM of the African Bird Club

held on 6 March 1999 at the School of Oriental and African Studies,
Thornhaugh Street, London at 14.00 hr

Present

The following registered their attendance at the meeting:

T Addinell, Philip Adlington, R Allison, Phil Atkinson, David Barker, Roy Barks, B H Beck, Keith Betton, N Binstead, Nik Borrov, Richard Bosanquet, Richard Butler, Paul Bryant, D R Calder, Mark Catterall, P C Cherry, Mark Cocker, Chris Collins, Ian Collins, David Ebbutt, Brenda Ferris, Lincoln Fishpool, Simon Fogg, Paul Fuller, F M Gauntlett, Brian Gee, Jon Gibbons, David Griffin, Michael Grigson, John Hammick, Moira and Roy Hargreaves, John Harris, Peter Headland, Chris Hendley, Nigel Jarman, R J Jeffers, Michael Kings, Paul Lascelles, Mark Lawrence, Russell Leavitt, A Leventis, Rob and Vicki Lucking, Duncan Macdonald, Clive Mann, Rod Martins, Mr and Mrs A S Mason, John Mason, Andy Merritt, Lloyd Milliner, David Murdoch, David Porter, Madeleine Prangley, Bill and Rowena Quantrill, Geoff Randall, Peter Roberts, Yvonne Savidge, P J Sellar, A W Seymour, B R Sykes, Jane Tatchell, Anne Thain, David Thomas, A J Todd, Gay Watton, Alan Wilkinson, Alan Williams, Martin and Barbara Woodcock.

Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Jacquie Bridges, John Fanshawe, John Farnsworth, Christopher Helm, Joan Howie, Colin Humpage, Guy Kirwan, Nigel Redman, Beau Rowlands, Paul Salt, Bob Scott, Richard Webb and John Wyatt.

Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were taken as read and approved unanimously.

Matters arising from the minutes

There were no matters arising.

Report of the Council for 1998

In introducing the report, copies of which had been distributed at the meeting, the Chairman stressed that it had been another year of progress. Membership had increased by 8%, the Bulletin had been improved with more colour plates, and additional conservation awards had been made. Particular thanks were due to two companies, Birdquest and AviFauna, who had sponsored conservation awards. This year saw the departure from Council of the last of the original members who had now completed the four years stipulated in the Club's Constitution: the Chairman recorded the Club's appreciation of their hard work during the Club's formative years. A major event during the year had been the Club's participation at the International Ornithological Congress in Durban and in the accompanying Birds and Birding Fair. This provided a great opportunity for the Club to make itself known and for Council members to meet some of our members and representatives from Africa and around the world.

Presentation of the Accounts for 1998 and Treasurer's report

In presenting the accounts (see page 6), copies of which had been distributed at the meeting, the Treasurer stated that the Club's finances remained healthy. In addition to the UK funds recorded in the accounts, on 31 December 1998, the Club also held 5093.84 Rand in its South African account and 17,402.60 Zimbabwe Dollars in its Zimbabwe account. These funds were available to finance local conservation projects. There being no questions, the Accounts were approved unanimously.

Election of Council

The following were elected to the African Bird Club Council for 1999:

Phil Atkinson, Keith Betton, Jacquie Bridges, Richard Butler, Stan Davies, John

Farnsworth, Moira Hargreaves, Paul Lascelles, Rob Lucking, Vicki Lucking, Bill Quantrill, Geoff Randall, Alan Wilkinson, Alan Williams, and John Wyatt.

In addition, Mark Catterall, whose nomination was received too late to be circulated with the length of notice required by the Constitution, was co-opted onto the Council.

Election of Executive Officers

The following were elected as Executive Officers of the Club for 1999:

Chairman	Phil Atkinson
Vice-Chairman	Geoff Randall
Secretary	Bill Quantrill
Treasurer	Alan Williams

Appointment of Auditor

Mr B P G Blackler, FCMA, MIMgt was elected as Auditor for 1999.

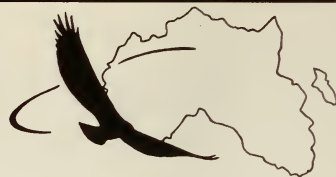
Any Other Business

Joan Howie had submitted a resolution proposing that a special subscription rate of £10 a year should be introduced for retired people. The Chairman proposed that the Council should take a decision on this after studying the financial implications, but said he would also welcome the views of members. In discussion it emerged that members present were of the virtually unanimous view that if the Club could afford to offer concessionary subscription rates, the benefit should be directed to members in Africa, probably through wider use of the existing supported and affiliated membership schemes. The Chairman said the Council would be guided accordingly.

There being no other business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 14.45 hr.



Africa Round-up



General

Multi-coloured Wood Sandpipers

Over the next few years, a project based in eastern Europe will be investigating the migration routes of Wood Sandpipers *Tringa glareola* between Europe and Africa. Trapped birds will be dye-marked yellow or pink and will also be given a combination of colour-rings. Birders in Africa are asked to watch for these and indeed all colour-ringed birds. Records of waders can be sent to the Wader Study Group, British Trust for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU, UK.

Source: British Trust for Ornithology

Black-collared Bulbul is a bulbul

Doubt has long existed over the taxonomic status of the Black-collared Bulbul *Neolestes torquatus*, it being variously treated as a member of the Pycnonotidae or as a shrike (Malaconotidae, Laniidae or Prionopidae). A new, multi-disciplinary, review of the species' biology, anatomy and DNA, performed by Bob Dowsett *et al*, recommends that it be retained as a primitive member of the bulbuls, albeit as *incertae sedis*.

Source: Ibis 141, pp 22–28

World Birdwatch

We often accord space to stories reported in *World Birdwatch*, the full colour magazine of BirdLife International. The first issue of 1999 was devoted to the organisation's seabird conservation programme. Among a number of items of interest to Afrotropical ornithologists, birders and conservationists, Norman Ratcliffe's report on the current status of the important seabird colonies on Ascension Island, and Peter Ryan's profile of the globally threatened Spectacled Petrel *Procellaria conspicillata*, are likely to be essential reading. *World Birdwatch* is only available on subscription from BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA. E-mail: birdlife@birdlife.org.uk.

Snake-Eagle and African Long-tailed Hawk taxonomy revisited

Two recent papers in *Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl.* have shed new light on the taxonomy of African raptors. In the first, Mlikovsk Ω , confirms the earlier (1987) opinion of

Olson that African Long-tailed Hawk *Urotriorchis macrourus* is neither an *Accipiter* nor closely related to these hawks. Based on a comprehensive review of the species' osteology, the author considers it to belong with the *Polemaetus* eagles. Secondly, Bill Clark, basing his work on a review of specimen material, photographs and personal field experience, has summarised the differences between Short-toed Snake-Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*, Black-breasted Snake-Eagle *C. pectoralis* and Beadouin's Snake-Eagle *C. beaudouini* and stressed that they should be recognised as separate species. Many recent publications, e.g. *The Birds of Africa* and Sibley & Monroe, treat these taxa as subspecies of a single species.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl. 119, pp 56–59

VIREO reaches 6,000

The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia houses the world's most comprehensive collection of bird photographs (VIREO—Visual Resources for Ornithology). The collection now contains over 95,000 bird images taken by some of the best bird photographers throughout the globe. Photographer Warwick Tarboton recently contributed an image of the 6,000th species on VIREO's files: a Chestnut-vented Tit-Babbler *Parisoma subcaeruleum*, a common resident of semi-arid areas in southern Africa, taken at Nylsvley, a nature reserve in northern South Africa. VIREO is utilised by research scientists and commercial users throughout the world. The editors of *Bull. ABC* would like to acknowledge the important assistance VIREO affords the Club's publication by providing photographs from the collection free of charge. For further details of the collection contact



African Long-tailed Hawk *Urotriorchis macrourus* by Nik Borrow (courtesy of BirdQuest)

VIREO, The Academy of Natural Sciences, 1900 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia PA 19103-1195, USA. E-mail: VIREO@say.acnatsci.org.

Source: VIREO press release, 9 April 1999

Southern Africa

New subspecies of White-tailed Tropicbird

A new subspecies of White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus* has been described from Europa Island, in the southern Mozambique Channel. Birds from this isolated population were found to be significantly smaller than those of the two previously recognised subspecies from the Indian Ocean, and also had a high frequency of golden morphs, a feature not present elsewhere in the western Indian Ocean taxa. It also differs from the two small subspecies occurring in the central and eastern Atlantic Ocean and in the Pacific Ocean by the frequency of the colour morphs and the distribution. The new subspecies, named *europae*, is endemic to Europa Island and has been estimated to number c1,000 pairs.

Source: Ibis 141 pp 233–239

The Atlas of the Birds of Southern Mozambique

The three years of fieldwork for the bird atlas of southern Mozambique—namely the area between the Save River and the KwaZulu-Natal border—has been completed. This work, begun in 1995 and largely undertaken by Vincent Parker, has demonstrated that species' distribution patterns are far more complex than previously thought. In a country recovering from the ravages of 20 years of civil war, with a road system in tatters, Parker has accessed 98% of the 210 grid cells and visited more than 95% of them in each of the three 'seasons' that constitute the Mozambique year. Apart from distribution maps, the atlas presents information on the conservation status of all species, with special emphasis on those that are threatened, and includes data for adjacent Zimbabwe, South Africa and Swaziland. It covers all 523 species, except vagrants. All profits from the sale of this atlas will be committed to funding fieldwork for the next three years to produce the atlas for

central Mozambique, between the Save and Zambezi Rivers. The last part of the project will also be the most difficult: the survey of northern Mozambique. Orders may be placed with the Endangered Wildlife Trust, Private Bag X11, Parkview 2122, South Africa; tel.: (011) 486 1102; fax: (011) 486 1506; e-mail: ewtsa@global.co.za.

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding
3 (6), p 19

Oldest White-backed Vulture

The oldest White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus* on record was found dead on 3 October 1998. 19 years after it had been ringed as a nestling, in September 1979, in the Kimberley district of the Northern Cape, South Africa. With this record, the known longevity for this species is nearing that of Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus*, which has been found to reach 21 years of age.

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding
3 (6), p 19

More on tracking by satellite

We previously reported (*Bull. ABC* 5:88) that German researchers had tracked, by satellite, a Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* from its breeding grounds in Poland to Zambia where it wintered in both 1996 and 1997. Remarkably this was the first record of the species in the country. A second bird has recently been tracked to a nearby wintering area in Zambia; this bird has bred in the same area of Poland where the first bird nested.

Source: World Birdwatch 21 (1), p 5

Longevity in Pale Chanting Goshawk

A female Pale Chanting Goshawk *Melierax canorus* found dead in central Namibia, 20 years and nine months after it had been ringed as an adult in January 1978, just 12 km from the recovery site. This is the second oldest Pale Chanting Goshawk in the SAFRING databank: the oldest was recovered 21 years after it was ringed.

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding
3 (6), p 19

SAFRING and review of raptor recoveries

1998 saw the 50th anniversary of bird ringing in South Africa. Ringing was initially administered by the Southern African Ornithological Society until SAFRING commenced in 1971. The number of birds ringed in southern Africa now totals over 70,000 annually. Terry Oatley, who administered the scheme from 1981–1997, has recently reviewed the recoveries of raptors ringed in southern Africa. An example of the species text, published in

Bird Numbers (a publication of the Avian Demography Unit), reveals some fascinating facts about the movements, ecology and longevity of Pale Chanting Goshawk *Melierax canorus* (see item above). This publication can be obtained from the Avian Demography Unit, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa. The price of the book which features 41 species and contains 64 A4 pages is R60 including VAT (R70 for addresses outside South Africa).

Source: Bird Numbers 7 (2), pp 3–4

Oil spill contaminates penguins

In May 1998, an oil pipeline fractured and released 500 tons of oil into Cape Town harbour. A total of 505 African Penguins *Spheniscus demersus* was collected from Robben Island and taken to the South African National Foundation for Conservation of Coastal Birds' (SANCCOB) rehabilitation centre in Table View. African Penguin has undergone a massive decline throughout the 20th century from 1.45 million adults in 1910 to only 180,000 in 1991–94. Several of these birds had been oiled previously, in 1994, highlighting just how serious the problem of oil pollution is for these birds. The first birds to be rehabilitated were marked with yellow dye and released in June. Rehabilitation of oiled birds is an enormous amount of work and it is important to monitor just how effective it is. The penguins return to Robben Island was monitored and up to 43% of the birds collected at Robben Island did return to the island. The location of the remainder is unknown and only long-term monitoring will reveal the full impact of this oil spill.

Source: Bird Numbers 7 (2), p 7

Is size important?

A recent analysis of birds in southern Africa's protected areas posed the question: is it better to have a small number of larger reserves or a larger number of small reserves? Nature conservation in Africa is one of many priorities in the continent and the scarce resources devoted to it need to be efficiently used by policy makers. To be effective, policy must be based on sound research.

The study undertaken by James Harrison and René Navarro took species that are found in the woodland biome. After removing rare species, they tested whether certain bird species exhibited associations with larger or smaller protected areas. Of the 317 species considered, 63 (20%) showed significant associations between protected area size and bird abundance. Of these, 59 had a positive relationship and these included raptors, hornbills and to a lesser extent woodpeckers, rollers, shrikes and

cuckoos. The reasons for this are varied and may include the foraging ecology of the individual species outside protected areas (especially raptors and vultures) and greater habitat diversity in larger areas. The authors conclude that many woodland species occur more frequently in larger reserves than in smaller reserves and that this is relevant for conservation policy.

Source: Bird Numbers 7 (2), pp 28–31

Songwewelala bites the dust

Songwewelala Local Forest Reserve in Zambia is well-known to Zambian Ornithological Society (ZOS) members as an excellent place to see miombo endemics, in particular Bar-winged Weaver *Ploceus angolensis*. In 1997, ZOS decided that the area should be included in the list of proposed Important Bird Areas (IBAs), one of only 30 across the whole country. However a visit last year revealed that there has been extensive logging activity and clearance for farming. The reserve had been degazetted, a fate shared by other similar areas, and conservationists are having limited success in protecting these areas.

Source: Zambian Orn. Soc. Newsletter 28
(4), p 1

Zambia bird report 1997..

A warm welcome to the first Zambia bird report, which has been produced, under the editorship of Peter Leonard and Wouter Peters, by the Zambian Ornithological Society (ZOS) and with financial support from the Paul Flew Memorial Fund. In addition to the all-important systematic list, there are a number of articles and notes providing new information on Zambian birds. Chief amongst these are three new species to the country accounts: Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga*, Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* and White-winged Swamp Warbler *Bradypterus carpalis*. Additional material includes short papers on forest birds in Western Zambezi district, notes concerning Afrotropical bird movements near Kafue, ornithological research priorities within Zambia, and recent changes to the country's list. The report is obtainable from the Zambian Ornithological Society, PO Box 33944, Lusaka 10101, Zambia. E-mail: zos@zamnet.zm.

...and a request

All 1998 species records will be published by the Zambian Ornithological Society in a report at the end of the year. Observers are requested to submit all records to ZOS, Box 33944, Lusaka 10101, Zambia. E-mail: zos@zamnet.zm.

Satellite tracking of Blue Cranes

The Eskom/Endangered Wildlife Trust project to learn more of the movements of Blue Cranes *Anthropoides paradisea* in South Africa continues and in the 1997–98 summer, transmitters were attached to eight chicks reared in the Karoo, Dullstrom and Overberg regions. Little is known about seasonal movements of Blue Cranes and it is hoped that satellite tracking will determine those areas cranes rely on when on migration and in winter. At the time of writing, the birds had not moved significantly as they had only just learnt to fly.

Source: Crane Link 3, pp 6–7

Wirebird numbers down

Recent censuses of the globally threatened Wirebird or St Helena Plover *Charadrius sanctaehelenae* have revealed a worrying decline of c20% since the last full survey 10 years ago. Declines have been most pronounced on pasture land sites. A number of factors are thought to be responsible including the encroachment of non-native plant species, increased growth of annual weeds due to high rainfall and possibly a decline in invertebrate prey due to changing farming methods.

Source: The Wirebird Project, Newsletter 2

Double moult by Black-chested Prinia

Few passerines are known to undertake a complete moult twice a year. A recent study, by M. Herremans, has demonstrated that Black-chested Prinia *Prinia flavicans*, an endemic of the southern African thornbelt, is one such species. Adults perform a fast moult (taking c67 days) in September–November involving all birds, and a slower moult (of c108 days) in February–June, when c95% of adults moulted in April. The species' pattern of secondary replacement was demonstrated to be variable and also unusual among passerines. Herremans also discovered that summer breeding occurred erratically, in response to rains, and could overlap with moulting behaviour. When breeding occurred during autumn moult (February–June), birds would assume a new summer plumage, rather than winter plumage.

Source: Ibis 141, pp 115–124

SAFRING ringing report 1996–97

The SAFRING ringing report always makes interesting reading. During the first six months of 1997 some fascinating recoveries were received including spectacular movements by Wandering Albatross

Diomedea exulans and White Storks *Ciconia ciconia*, several of which moved 7–8,000 km from their ringing site. One problem highlighted in the ringing report is the increasing number of longline fatalities that SAFRING is receiving. During this period, two Wandering Albatross, a Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea chlororhynchus*, a Southern Giant *Macronectes gigantus* and two Northern Giant Petrel *M. balli* were reported as taken off longlines. Other interesting recoveries include several Red-billed Quelea *Quelea quelea* recoveries, part of a co-ordinated study of the movements of this species. A Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* ringed in March 1994 in South Africa was found in Saudi Arabia in June 1997. A European Swift *Apus apus* was taken for food in Malawi. A ring, found in the stomach of a large snook in Concepcion Bay in Namibia, had been placed on a Cape Gannet *Sula capensis* nestling six weeks previously 1,700 km away at Bird Island in the Eastern Cape. Whether this says more about snook or Cape Gannet migration remains unknown!

Source: SAFRING News
26 (2), pp 72–80

European Reed Warblers in southern Africa

European Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* was previously considered to be a rare Palearctic migrant to southern Africa, but recent ringing at Phakalane and elsewhere in Botswana has demonstrated this species to be more common than previously thought. Between November 1996 and mid-April 1997, 53 birds were caught by Stephanie Tyler along with a Basra Reed Warbler *A. griseldis* (the first country record), suggesting that *scirpaceus* is a not uncommon visitor to southern Africa especially in years of high rainfall. Other *Acrocephalus* caught included European

Sedge Warblers *A. schoenobaenus*, some of which spent weeks or months at the site, three Marsh Warblers *A. palustris* and a Great Reed Warbler *A. arundinaceus*.

Source: SAFRING News
26 (2), pp 81–82

Long-billed Lark is five species

Peter Ryan and Paulette Bloomer have recently performed mt-DNA sequencing tests on taxa within the Long-billed Lark *Centbilanda curvirostris* complex, which has traditionally been viewed as comprising 13 subspecies within three phenotypically well-defined groups. The authors conclude that three taxa are genetically highly distinct (differing from each other by 6–9% sequence divergence) and one of these comprises three phenotypically distinct taxa (differing from each other by 2% sequence divergence). Thus, Ryan and Bloomer propose the recognition of these five as species-level taxa: *C. curvirostris*, *C. brevirostris*, *C. semitorquata*, *C. sibcoronata* and *C. benguelensis*. The last two-named are less closely related to the other three, and exhibit less sharply defined morphological and plumage differences than the others. Male display songs provide additional support for this arrangement. The position of Short-clawed Lark *C. chinana* in relation to these five taxa is unresolved. The ranges of these five are allopatric but further work is required in northern Namibia and Angola to elucidate certain distributional limits.

Source: Auk 116, pp 194–208

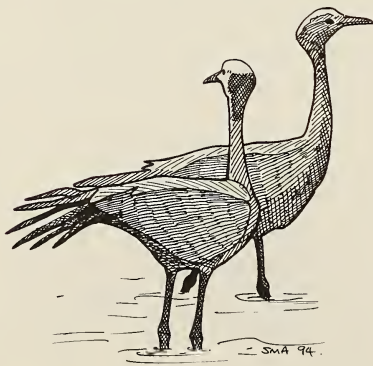
Madagascar Fish-Eagle feeding ecology

The results of a quantitative study of Madagascar Fish-Eagle *Haliaeetus vociferoides* diet and foraging success in western Madagascar, conducted in mid-1996, have been published recently. It appears to be an opportunistic predator, suggesting that the introduction of exotic fish, to replace native fish, is unlikely to have a detrimental effect on its population. Among males, at least, it would appear that fish species diversity affects the species' foraging success, making it sensitive to declines in fish diversity.

Source: Wilson Bull. 111, pp 15–21

Conservation Corporation Africa launches new journal

This organisation (hereafter CCA) employs more than 200 rangers, trackers and guides in Botswana, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. The group, which is a commercial operation, has recently published the inaugural issue of its journal, rather unimaginatively titled *Conservation Corporation Africa*



Blue Cranes *Anthropoides paradisea*
by Mark Andrews

Ecological Journal. Behind the bland title, however, this is a worthwhile attempt to present interesting observations, on a host of fauna and flora taxa, in an easily accessible format. While much of the content of the first volume appears to be devoted to mammals, especially big cats, there is much to interest ornithologists here, with a considerable body of basic life-history data on a wide variety of species, for which additional information is always valuable, being presented in the 189 pages. The editor of the new journal, Duncan Butchart, can be contacted at: PO Box 12573, Nelspruit 1200, South Africa. E-mail: dbnature@iafrica.com.

Source: Dave Varty in litt. May 1999

East Africa

Forest birds in Tanzania

Two important papers on the conservation of forest birds in Tanzania have been published in a recent issue of *Bird Conservation International*. The first, by Nathalie Seddon *et al.*, details the ecology and conservation status of threatened birds in the Nilo Forest Reserve and Nguu North Forest Reserve. Among many interesting results, two species—East Coast Akalat *Sheppardia gunningi* (considered globally vulnerable) and Uluguru Violet-backed Sunbird *Antbrepetes neglectus* (globally near-threatened)—appear to be commoner than previously thought, and the authors recommend that their threat status be downgraded to near-threatened and regionally near-threatened. Elsewhere in the same issue, Jon Fjeldsa examines the impact of human forest disturbance on the endemic avifauna of the Udzungwa Mountains. Comparative data from disturbed and mature forest types revealed marginally greater species diversity in the former (70 versus 61–65 species in different mature forest types) but with an obvious loss in restricted-range species, especially shaded understorey taxa but also among larger insectivores within mixed canopy-

feeding flocks, in disturbed forests.

Source: Bird Conserv. International
9, pp 9–28; 47–62

Nature Kenya

The East Africa Natural History Society is undergoing a facelift. Together with a new constitution, eight full-time staff based in a fully equipped office and a strong conservation programme as befits a BirdLife International partner, the society has acquired a new name, Nature Kenya. In addition to organising surveys, a nest record scheme and other fieldwork, the revitalised organisation will also be producing educational materials for schools and training bird guides to aid tourism. Nature Kenya can be contacted via National Museums of Kenya, Department of Ornithology, P.O. Box 4486, Nairobi, Kenya. We at the ABC wish it well.

Source: Brit. Birds 92, p 207

Ngulia: help wanted

During autumn 1998 nearly 20,000 birds were ringed by the Ngulia ringing group in Kenya. The group seeks assistance from experienced ringers in autumn 1999. Contact Graeme Backhurst, Box 15194, Nairobi, Kenya. Tel: 00 254 2891419. E-mail: graeme@healthnet.or.ke.

Source: Brit. Birds 92, p 270

Long-term effects of logging

A recent study of the avifauna of Kibale National Park, Uganda, has demonstrated that the avifauna of a forest area logged 23 years previously had still not recovered at the time of the survey.

Sources: Biol. Conserv. 7, p 777;
World Birdwatch 21 (1), p 5

Sexual imbalance in Taita Thrush

Taita Thrush *Turdus (olivaceus) belleri*, currently considered globally threatened by BirdLife International, is a monomorphic species endemic to the Taita Hills of south-east Kenya. A recent DNA study of this taxon has shown that there are significantly more males than females within the extant population, a factor that clearly has important implications for the species' survival.

Sources: Biol. Conserv. 7, p 869;
World Birdwatch 21 (1), p 5

Rats out, the ants move in

Black Rats *Rattus rattus* were, following their accidental introduction to Bird Island in 1967 until their successful eradication in 1995, one of the major conservation problems in the Seychelles. Now a new problem has emerged. Crazy Ants *Anolepis longipes*, another introduced species, were first noticed on the same island in 1991, but by 1997 it was obvious they were infesting a large part of Bird Island, quite possibly as a direct result of a lack of predation by rats. In 1998, the ants infested and subsequently caused a colony of 60,000 pairs of Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata* to desert their nests, and also overran a White Tern *Gygis alba* colony, killing chicks as well as reptiles, other insects and vegetation. Although ant control measures are now being addressed, the entire episode serves to illustrate, once again, just how vulnerable island ecosystems can be.

Source: World Birdwatch 21 (1), 2

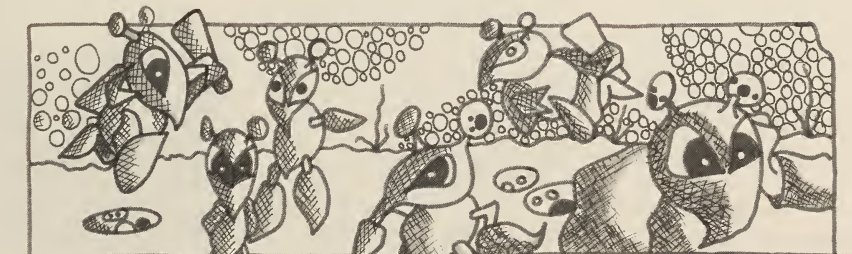
Seychelles Magpie-Robin population at record level

The highly endangered Seychelles Magpie-Robin *Copsychus sechellarum* has been the subject of an intensive recovery programme funded by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (BirdLife International partner in the UK) since 1988. In that year, the population was just 23 individuals on one island. A decade later, the population has more than trebled and by the end of March 1999 consisted of 80 birds on four islands.

Sources: Birdwatch October 1998;
Seychelles Magpie-Robin Recovery
Plan Quarterly Report 34

New species for Seychelles

The latest report of the Seychelles Bird Records Committee reports two additions to the Seychelles list. A Swinhoe's Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis* was watched at sea between Assumption and Aldabra, in October 1996, while another was picked up



Crazy Ants *Anolepis longipes*
by Lee Kirby

moribund on Praslin. Fifteen adult Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* on Mahé, in April 1997, was also the first confirmed record of this species in Seychelles.

Source: Birdwatch October 1998

Brown Booby—Seychelles most threatened bird species?

The Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* is now the most threatened bird species in the Seychelles. In October 1998, it was discovered that one of the only remaining colonies on the remote Farquhar atoll had been wiped out, probably by poachers. The few remaining pairs known in Seychelles nest on South Island, Cosmoledo.

Source: Birdwatch October 1998

Endemic birds of Ethiopia

A recent paper in *Alula* by Hadoram Shirihaï and Julian Francis presents the endemic birds of Ethiopia and illustrates a significant number of them in 24 excellent colour plates, including one of the few published photographs of Degodi Lark *Mirafra degodiensis*. Also illustrated are two other rare and localised larks—Gillett's Lark *Mirafra gilletti* and Sidamo Lark *Heteromirafra sidamoensis*—and notes are given on the identification of these species. Tips on when and where to go are also provided.

Source: *Alula* 5, pp 2–15

West Africa

Waders and waterfowl in Cameroon

The latest report from the Foundation Working Group International for Waterbird and Wetland Research (WIWO) has recently been published. Report 67, edited by Jeroen Wetten and Peter Spierenburg, discusses *Waders and Waterfowl in the floodplains of the Logone, Cameroun, January, 1993* and focuses particularly on studies of Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* and Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*. The report—which is essential reading for those interested in African wetland research—is obtainable from Stichting WIWO, Fetha 23, 3633 CT Vreeland, The Netherlands and costs Dfl20 if paying cash or by Eurocheque. An administration charge of Dfl15 should be added if paying directly into postal giro account 2666009 or ABN-AMRO bank account 570216613.

Source: Ekko Smith

New country records in West Africa

The most recent issue of *Malimbus* includes two papers concerning the West African avifauna. In the first, Bob Dowsett and his co-workers provide details of 44 additions to the list of birds recorded in the Central African Republic, as well as deleting 54 species from those certainly recorded from the country. Currently, 698 species are known to have been reliably reported in the CAR. Elsewhere in the same issue, Paul Scholte and his co-authors, in presenting bird records from the Waza–Logone area of northern Cameroon, add 11 species to the avifauna of the country. Finally, a series of short notes document the occurrence of Xavier's Greenbul *Phyllastrephus xavieri* (in Cross River National Park on 13 December 1997) and Green-throated Sunbird *Nectarinia rubescens* (three records, the first at Buru, Taraba state on 4 July 1995) in Nigeria. The first record of Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor* in Ghana involved two birds near Prampram, c60 km from Accra, on 19 May 1996. Patrick Claffey, writing in the same issue of *Malimbus*, reports the first occurrences of Crowned Eagle *Stephanoaetus coronatus* (two immatures in the Ouémé Valley on 29 March 1997) and White-breasted Negro-Finch *Nigrita fusconota* (one in the Ouémé Supérieur on 7 May 1996) in Bénin, and documents a decline in the fortunes of Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura* in the same country.

Source: *Malimbus* 21, pp 1–50, 51–60

Congo Peacocks and Little Terns

What do these two species have in common? Very little, but for the fact that they are both featured in the most recent (Number 5, April 1999) newsletter of the Democratic Republic of Congo Birding Association (see *Bull. ABC* 5: 91). Marc Pierard reports the welcome news that Congo Peacock *Afropavo congensis* appears to be still abundant in parts of Lomako Forest, while Tommy Pedersen describes the first observations of Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* in the country, in October 1992 and April 1993. Birders interested in the West or Central African avifaunas should contact Tommy Pedersen, c/o Smedgata 33, N-0651 Oslo, Norway; e-mail: stingray@online.no for more details concerning the DRCBA.

Source: *Afropavo* 5

Gambia book wins award

Since its publication, *A Field Guide to the Birds of The Gambia and Senegal*

by Clive Barlow, Tim Wachter and Tony Disley, has become an essential part of any birder's kit when visiting western Africa. Among bird books covering this region, it stands head-and-shoulders above any other field guide. It has also recently won the coveted Best Bird Book of the Year award (for 1998) from the magazine *British Birds*. These annual awards are closely fought contests and this is the first time a book entirely devoted to African birds has won.

Source: *Brit. Birds* 91, p 404

New data on the birds of the Cape Verdes

A recent paper in *Alauda* details a number of recent significant bird observations made in the archipelago, principally during July 1997. Special attention is made to records of shorebirds and two species of hirundines, while records of 15 other species are also presented, some of which have only been recorded on a few occasions previously in the Cape Verdes. In addition, another pertinent contribution on the islands' ornithology has also recently been published: Kees Hazevoet presents corrective and additional notes for 11 taxa based on a study of specimens collected on the islands and retained at the Centro de Zoologia in Lisbon. When preparing the BOU checklist, Hazevoet had been unable to examine this material and had been forced to rely on a secondary data source. Elsewhere, Norman Ratcliffe *et al* have re-examined the status of Raso Lark *Alauda razae*, concluding that it probably merits categorisation as critically endangered. The authors also present additional notes on the species' foraging behaviour.

Sources: *Alauda* 66, pp 307–311; *Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl.* 25, pp 25–31; *Bird Conserv. International* 9, pp 43–

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Congo Peacock *Afropavo congensis*
by Mark Andrews

New bird records from the Cape Verde Islands

In addition to the above publications, the third annual report on birds of the Cape Verde Islands includes details of seven additions to the list of birds recorded in the archipelago: Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* (a female on 14 March 1997), Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria* (an adult winter on 12 March 1997), Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* (an adult male on 21 July 1995), Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* (three in February–March 1997), Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* (one on 23 September 1997), Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* (one on 20 September 1997) and Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis* (one on 24 January 1997).

Source: Bull. Zool. Mus. Univ. Amsterdam 16, pp65–71

Banc d'Arguin receives help

To allow sustainable management of fish stocks in the Parc National du Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania, the World Wide Fund for Nature has raised SF400,000 for park surveillance. Three new patrol boats will help curtail threats posed by pirate fishing boats. Surveys undertaken during 1990–1994 found a c50% decrease in wader numbers in the park, Africa's largest coastal national park and one of the world's most important wetlands. The decline has been attributed to a decline in fish stocks through overfishing.

Source: Oryx 33, p 11

Birds of Bois de Boulogne, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

A list of 111 bird species regularly occurring in the "Bois de Boulogne", at the edge of Burkina Faso's capital Ouagadougou, during the rainy season of 1992, is presented in a recent paper in *Alauda*. Some 20 species that were recorded only once are not included. This small forest is relatively important because it comprises several habitats, such as relict forest patches, swamps and ponds, not found elsewhere in the area.

Source: *Alauda* 66, pp 324–328

Yellow-throated Petronia new to Chad

A pair of Yellow-throated Petronia *Petronia supercilialis* was discovered in a garden in N'Djamena, Chad, in February 1998. This constitutes a considerable range extension and the northernmost record of a species that ranges, principally through southern

Africa, north to northern Congo-Brazzaville and south-east Gabon.

Source: *Alauda* 67, pp 72–73

North Africa

Spanish Sparrows nesting in a well

During 1993 and 1996, a colony of c10 pairs of Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* was discovered nesting on ledges in a 10 m-deep concrete well on Fuerteventura, Canary Islands.

Source: *Limicola* 12, pp 313–316

Redstart wintering in north-eastern Morocco

Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* principally winters in sub-Saharan Africa and is thus normally only a passage migrant in North Africa. Some, however, were known to winter in Tunisia and Algeria. Recently, birds have also been found overwintering in Jbel Hamra forest, in north-east Morocco.

Source: *Alauda* 66, pp 315–316

Colonisation and geographical expansion of Eurasian Collared and Laughing Doves in Morocco

Data on the colonisation of Morocco by Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* and Laughing Dove *S. senegalensis*, which commenced 20 years ago, are presented in a recent paper in *Alauda*. Eurasian Collared Dove is now a common bird in the country, present in a wide coastal area from Tangier to Dakhla and in most large inland towns. The expansion of Laughing Dove has been much slower, sightings until late 1998 being scarce and localised, and breeding having only been proved in three areas. It will be interesting to note if Eurasian Collared Dove eventually meets its African sibling *S. roseogrisea*, whose range extends to northern Mauritania, only 360 km from the southernmost record of *S. decaocto*. And will the sub-Saharan nominate race of Laughing Dove meet its North African counterpart *phoenicophila*? The authors speculate that the nominate may, in fact, already have reached Morocco, as birds observed in Dakhla in 1995 and 1998 may have been of this race.

Source: *Alauda* 67, pp 23–36

Rats main cause of scarcity of Laurel Pigeon on Tenerife

Field studies on the effect of breeding success and nest predation on the population of the two endemic

pigeons of the Canary Islands, Bolle's Pigeon *Columba bollii* and Laurel Pigeon *C. junoniae* indicate that the Black Rat *Rattus rattus* is the key factor causing the scarcity of the latter on Tenerife. Nest predation was the most important cause of nesting failure in both species, but mainly affected the ground-breeding Laurel Pigeon. Experiments with artificial nests demonstrated that predation was lower in trees than on the ground and that it increased when fruit availability decreased. Counts of fruit indicated that availability progressively decreased from February–March to September–October. The different breeding biology of the two species thus probably determines their vulnerability to predation by rats, with Laurel Pigeon breeding on the ground, especially in April–August, being more vulnerable than Bolle's Pigeon, which breeds in trees mainly in February–June.

Source: *Ibis* 141, pp 52–59

Great Blue Heron on the Canary Islands

Tony Clarke has recently published a detailed description and several photographs of a controversial heron, present at Embalse de La Cruz Santa, Tenerife, during 5–17 December 1998, finally identified as the islands' first Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias*. There are approximately 12 records from the Azores, so this transatlantic vagrant's appearance should not be regarded as unexpected. 🦢

Source: *Birding World* 12, pp 158–161

Requests for Information

Rainforest raptors

Bill Clark is preparing a field guide and a companion photographic guide to African raptors. He would appreciate any information about locations, especially field stations, in Central Africa where rainforest raptors can be readily found for study and photography. Especially useful are locations where ornithologists and locals who know these species are already working. The species he is interested in are: Congo Serpent Eagle *Dryotriorchis spectabilis*, African Goshawk *Accipiter tachiro tousсенelii*, Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk *A. castanilius*, Red-thighed Sparrowhawk *A. erythropus*, Cassin's Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus africanus* and Long-tailed Hawk *Urotriorchis macrourus*. He is also interested in receiving good quality colour perched or flying photographs of the above species. Please respond to: W. S. Clark, 7800 Dasset Court, Apt. 101, Annandale, VA 22003, USA. E-mail: raptours@erols.com.

Madagascar Scops-Owl *Otus rutilus*

In the course of our fieldwork in Madagascar over the past decade, we have noted some interesting patterns of geographic variation in the voice of the Madagascar Scops-Owl *Otus rutilus*. More recently, critical examination of an extensive series of museum specimens has also revealed patterns of geographic variation largely concordant with those based on voice. Our investigations are nearing the end, but as always in such cases there are a few loose ends. In particular, we suspect that there may be important tape-recordings we have not traced. We are particularly interested in recordings of this species from the High Plateau region, and from northern Madagascar: what recordings exist for Nosy Be, Manongarivo, the Tsaratanana region, Ankarana, Analamera, or elsewhere? We would be very interested in hearing from anyone that has, or knows of, material from 'out of the way' places on Madagascar. There also are a few reports of two song types occurring at the same site; therefore, we are especially interested in any recordings that would document this pattern, or in recordings from sites where this phenomenon has been reported (the area around Maroansetra, and the Berenty Reserve).

All contributions, of course, will be fully acknowledged in the resulting publication. Please direct responses or inquiries to T. S. Schulenberg, Environmental and Conservation Programs, Field Museum of Natural History, Roosevelt Road at Lake Shore Drive, Chicago IL 60605, USA (tschulenberg@fmnh.org); P. C. Rasmussen, Room 336 NHB MRC 114, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC 20560-0131, USA (Rasmussen.Pamela@NMNH.SI.EDU); or A. F. A. Hawkins, BirdLife International, BP 1074, Antananarivo 101, Madagascar.

Records of House Crow

House Crow *Corvus splendens* has been spreading through the Afrotropical region since its arrival in Zanzibar at the start of the 20th century. As part of an ongoing programme to monitor its worldwide dispersal, records are requested of sightings and status outside its known range. Well established populations are known at Suez, Egypt, in coastal Kenya, Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, Durban, South Africa, and Mauritius. Small numbers have appeared elsewhere but the species' current status is unknown. As House Crow's spread has been primarily ship-assisted, it is possible that the species could appear at almost any port in East and southern Africa, and Madagascar, as well as along the Mediterranean coast. Records and information should be sent to: Colin Ryall, School of Environmental Management, Farnborough College, Boundary Road, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 6NU, UK. Tel: +44 (0) 1252 407220. Fax: +44 (0) 1252 407212. E-mail: c.ryall@fam-ct.ac.uk.

Winter records of Ring Ouzels

As part of a study to elucidate the winter activities and movements of Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*, Colin Ryall would be interested to receive reports of this species from September–April involving any of the three races in any geographical region, but particularly of *T. t. torquatus* and *T. t. alpestris* in southern Spain and north Africa. As detailed information as possible would be invaluable, including location, date, number of birds, type of activities, feeding, habitat, race, sex/age and whether flocking with other species. Records from any year would be greatly appreciated. Please contact Dr. Colin Ryall, School of Environmental Management, Farnborough College, Boundary Road,

Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 6SB, UK. Tel: 01252 407220. Fax: 01252 407212. E-mail: c.ryall@fam-ct.ac.uk.

Hirundines wintering in Africa

Different populations of Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* and Common Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* populations can be separated according to the metal contents of their second longest tail feathers. For instance, British and Ukraine breeding birds differ greatly in the contents of 14 types of metals in their tail feathers. Those who ring birds in Africa (especially in western and central areas) are invited to assist a project seeking to identify where the different European breeding populations of these two species spend the winter, by sending tail feathers (the second longest pair) and the ring number to the address below. The relevant tail feathers should be snipped only by those familiar with this procedure and can ensure that the bird is released unharmed. Local and international organisations are invited to join in this collaborative project. If you require more information, contact Ákos Hívekovics, President, Hungarian Action Team for the Conservation of Nature TACS Alapítvány, H-1074 Budapest, Csengery utca 11. II. em. 201. Tel: +36 1 461 8000. Fax: +36 1 461 8008. E-mail: falco@nt.htg.gau.hu.

Wintering Aquatic Warblers

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (UK Partner of BirdLife International) is undertaking a study of the wintering sites of Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*, as part of an action plan to identify key sites for the conservation of globally threatened species. Information on the species' habitat use at migration sites and on the winter quarters is required. Wintering sites are known in Mauritania, Senegal, Mali, Ghana, Egypt, Morocco and Algeria, but so few data are available that the RSPB is seeking to extend its enquiries to as many countries as possible. Anyone with relevant information is requested to contact Dr Norbert Schaffer, Country Programmes Officer, European Programmes, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, UK. Tel: +44 1767 680551. Fax: +44 1767 683211. E-mail: norbert.schaffer@rspb.org.uk.

Threatened waterbirds in Morocco—request for data

Under a joint project between the Spanish and Moroccan governments, data is being compiled on the distribution of globally and regionally threatened waterbirds in order to prepare joint conservation plans for the Andalucía–Morocco region. For this reason, I would be very grateful to receive counts of the following species from any Moroccan wetlands since 1990: Marbled Teal *Marmaronetta angustirostris*, Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*, Crested Coot *Fulica cristata*, Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*, Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*, White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* (also Ruddy Duck *O. jamaicensis* and hybrids), and Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*. Observations during our own fieldwork (eg 1–20 Marbled Teal at Sidi-Moussa on 23–24 October 1997) are being published in the Moroccan journal *Porphyrio* and the bulletin of Threatened Waterfowl Specialist Group. There is no need to send any data that have also been

submitted to *Porphyrio*. Please note that some Marbled Teal, Crested Coot and Glossy Ibis in Spain have been marked with wing-tags, neck collars and PVC rings. I am very interested in any observations of marked birds, even if you were unable to read the code. Please submit data to: Andy Green, Doñana Biological Station, Avenida Maria Luisa, Pabellon del Peru, +1013 Sevilla, Spain. Fax: (34) +95 4621125. Tel: (34) +95 4232340 (0900-1900 local time). E-mail: andy@ebd03.ebd.csic.es.

Broad-billed Sandpipers in West Africa?

Svend Roennest (svend.roennest@skolekom.dk) is seeking information about Broad-billed Sandpipers *Limicola falcinellus* in Africa. This species is known to winter, in Africa, on the Mediterranean and Red Sea coasts, and in East and southern Africa, but there have been suggestions it may also winter in western Africa. If any members have records of the species from West Africa, he would be glad to receive details.

Wanted: yellow-painted Ruff

Birders in Africa and Europe are asked to search for yellow-painted Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*. They are best located in flight, when the yellow painted underwings are very striking. On the ground, they can be recognized by the yellow painted breast, belly and tail. These Ruff were painted in north Cameroon, in January 1999, during a joint expedition of the Dutch foundation WITWO, the Waza-Logone Project and the Wildlife School Garoua, and is a part of the West African Programme of Wetlands International. It is hoped to discover the migration routes and breeding areas of Ruff wintering along the Logone River, that separates Cameroon and Chad. Negative reports are also welcome. Sighting data should include location, date, total numbers of Ruff and numbers of yellow-painted birds. All observers will be informed personally of the results. Please send your data to: WITWO Cameroon/Chad 1999, Gerrit Genitsen & Bert Dijkstra, p/a Veerallee 33, 8019 AD Zwolle, The Netherlands. E-mail: gerritgerritsen@hetnet.nl. ?



African Bird Club Conservation Fund Update

Three awards have been made from the Conservation Fund so far in 1999.

- Projet ZICOMA (Madagascar) was funded to undertake an intensive search of Lake Alaotra to confirm the status of the critically threatened Alaotra Little Grebe *Tachybaptus rufolavatus*. This project was kindly co-funded by AviFauna and a full account of the project's findings will appear in the next *Bull. ABC*.
- Michael Maina of the National Museums of Kenya received an award to look at the effectiveness of

nestboxes as a conservation tool to reverse the declining population trends of hole-nesting birds around Lake Naivasha.

- Finally, Craig Symes from the University of Natal, South Africa was funded to assist his study of the poorly known Grey-headed Parrot *Poicephalus fuscicollis snabelicus*.

The first year of the ABC/NHBS Book Awards was very successful with six awards being made. Anide Island Nature Reserve, Seychelles; Makarere University, Uganda; the Queen Elizabeth National Park Bird

Observatory, Uganda; the Ethiopian Wildlife & Natural History Society; the Seychelles Islands Foundation and the University of Nigeria all received books up to the value of GBP100 (US\$150).

Applications are invited for the 1999 / 2000 ABC/NHBS book awards. The African Bird Club is grateful for the continued sponsorship of the Natural History Book Service in this initiative.

For further information about the ABC Conservation Fund, see p. 94 of this bulletin. ?

African Bird Club

CONSERVATION PROGRAMME

ABC Conservation Fund

The ABC Conservation Fund supports small conservation projects in Africa. In 1998, seven Conservation Awards totalling over £3,000 (US\$4,500) were made. These awards embraced a wide range of activities in five countries from environmental education projects to research on endangered species.

ABC Conservation Awards are available to African individuals or institutions or to people normally resident in an African country, and the Club welcomes project proposals for funding up to a maximum of £750 (US\$1,500). Further information on the Conservation Fund and guidelines on how to write a project proposal can be found on the ABC website (<http://www.africanbirdclub.org>) or obtained from the Club address below.

ABC/NHBS Book Awards

The ABC/NHBS book award scheme is a collaboration between the ABC and the Natural History Book Service. Five book vouchers to the value of £100 (US\$150) each are awarded annually to successful applicants. The vouchers can be redeemed against books to the same value sold by NHBS. The aim of the award is to promote an awareness of birds, birding and bird conservation in Africa, and ideally applicants should be able to demonstrate that the material will be available for a wide range of people to consult. The deadline for applications for the 1999/2000 book awards is 31 January 2000.

NHBS catalogues are available on request from NHBS, 2–3 Wills Road, Totnes, Devon TQ9 5XN, UK. E-mail: nhbs@nhbs.co.uk

ABC Expedition Award

The ABC Expedition Award is a new initiative. One award of £1,000 (US\$1500) will be made annually. Final details have yet to be confirmed but potential applicants organising an expedition to or within Africa for the year 2000 are invited to register their interest by writing to the Club address below. Full details will then be forwarded when they are available. This award is open to all.

Further information...

For further information about the African Bird Club Conservation Programme, please write to Rob Lucking at: African Bird Club, c/o BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA, UK, or by e-mail to Rob.Lucking@rspb.org.uk

St Helena Wirebird: the forgotten plover

Neil McCulloch

Le Pluvier de Sainte-Hélène *Charadrius sanctaebelenae* est la seule espèce terrestre endémique de Sainte-Hélène (Atlantique sud) qui survit à ce jour. La plupart des espèces disparues avaient totalement ou quasi-totalement perdu la faculté de voler, un trait qui n'est pas partagé par le Pluvier de Sainte-Hélène, ce qui a probablement contribué à sa survie face aux prédateurs introduits. Son écologie et son comportement étaient peu connus avant les années 1980. L'espèce fréquente les pâturages et les abords du semi-désert dans le nord et l'ouest de l'île, et pourrait avoir bénéficié de la déforestation qui accompagna la colonisation de Sainte-Hélène par l'homme, quoique son aire de répartition se soit probablement retrécie pendant la période de la culture de lin, de 1907 à 1966. L'espèce atteint sa plus grande densité dans des herbages de moyenne altitude (300–500 m); la densité est influencée par la présence de certaines proies invertébrées et la topographie, ainsi que par la pluviométrie et la structure de la végétation. L'oiseau affectionne les zones d'herbes basses (moins de 10 cm de hauteur) et surpentes faibles. La période de nidification s'étend sur toute l'année, avec toutefois une pointe en octobre-février. Les deux œufs sont couvés par les deux sexes pendant environ 28 jours. Les jeunes peuvent voler à l'âge d'environ 5 semaines et s'assemblent en groupes lâches comptant jusqu'à 15 individus. Malgré la crainte que la population, qui comptait 450 individus au recensement de 1989, ait chuté de 20–30% depuis, à cause de la dégradation de l'habitat et la prédation, il n'est pas prouvé de façon certaine qu'un de ces facteurs ait augmenté significativement. Ainsi, la poursuite des recherches en la matière s'avère indispensable.

Ask a random sample of people what they know about St Helena and it is likely that a reasonable number will be aware of the island's connection with Napoleon Bonaparte. Considerably fewer will know where the island is and you would be extremely lucky to find anyone with knowledge of its flora and fauna. In many ways this is hardly surprising; the South Atlantic island of St Helena (15°56'S 5°42'W) is one of the most isolated islands in the world and was uninhabited until the 16th century. It is situated c1900 km west of Angola and 3300 km east of Brazil (Fig. 1). The nearest land is Ascension Island 1300 km to the north-west. Although St Helena covers only 122 km² and has maximum dimensions of 16 km x 10 km, its extreme isolation has been a catalyst in the development of a biodiversity to rival such evolutionary 'hot-spots' as the Galápagos and Aldabra¹⁶.

Both Darwin and Wallace commented on the diversity of St Helena's endemic invertebrates and plants following visits to the island. It is also known that at least six endemic terrestrial bird species occurred there^{2,11}. It is therefore a tragedy that—since its discovery—the island has been subjected to environmental degradation on a scale sufficient to extirpate much of its native flora and fauna.

St Helena, like most oceanic islands, had a volcanic origin and emerged from the sea c14 million years ago. There has, however, been no volcanic activity during the last seven million years. The island was discovered by the Portuguese navigator João da Nova Castella in 1502, when it was apparently heavily wooded. No permanent settlement was established on St Helena until 1659 but, during the intervening period, a variety of exotic domestic and pest species rapidly became established, either to support

occasional human habitation or by accident¹². Pigs and goats were present by 1536, the latter having possibly been introduced as early as 1513. By 1588, Captain Thomas Cavendish was able to see herds of 100s of goats during his visit to St Helena. Feral cats and dogs were present by 1634. Black Rats *Rattus rattus* probably first came ashore soon after the discovery of the island and were certainly a serious pest by 1666. Brown Rat *R. norvegicus* apparently became established in the 18th century. The ravages of goats was succeeded by a demand for timber for building and fuel which resulted in widespread and rapid deforestation, and catastrophic erosion of the unconsolidated soils. The consequences of this, and the introduction of non-indigenous

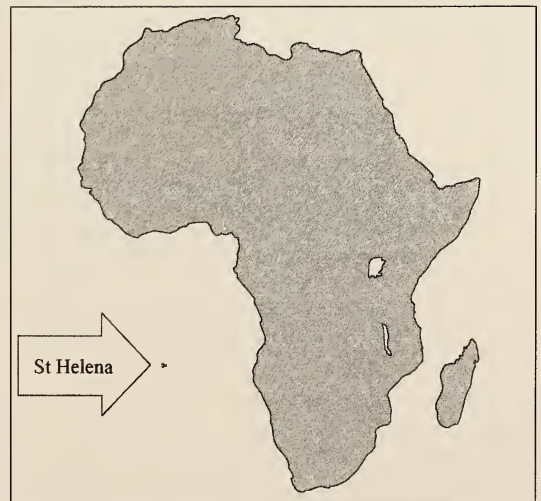


Figure 1. Location of St Helena.

predators, included the extinction of all the endemic landbirds with the exception of a plover *Charadrius sanctaebelenae*—known locally as the Wirebird—and severe reductions in the numbers and diversity of breeding seabirds. These extinctions appear to have been extremely rapid, within perhaps just 50 years. None of the lost species were described in life, being known only from skeletal material.

The present-day terrestrial avifauna of St Helena consists of 11 breeding species: Chukar *Alectoris chukar*, Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*, Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*, Wirebird, Feral Pigeon *Columba livia*, Peaceful Dove *Geopelia striata*, Common Mynah *Acridotheres tristis*, Madagascar Fody *Foudia madagascariensis*, Java Sparrow *Padda oryzivora*, Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild* and Yellow Canary *Serinus flaviiventris*. All but the Wirebird and Common Moorhen have been deliberately introduced¹².

The Wirebird

The Wirebird has the smallest range of any wader. It is closely related to Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius* of Africa, with which it undoubtedly shares a common ancestry, and they have often been treated as conspecific³. Although the Wirebird closely resembles *C. pecuarius*, it is substantially larger, paler and differs markedly in its physical proportions, eg its tarsus is c40% longer than *C. pecuarius* although the sternum is only 10% longer¹¹. The bill is also disproportionately longer.

The Wirebird's wing is more rounded and its pectoral muscles relatively smaller than in *C. pecuarius*. More extreme examples of such trends are evident in the other endemic landbirds known from St Helena, most of which appear to have been flightless or to have had considerably reduced powers of flight¹¹. The Wirebird's retention of efficient flight has undoubtedly assisted its survival in the face of introduced predators.

It is unknown when the Wirebird's ancestors first reached St Helena but bones analysed by Olson¹¹ appear to be at least 1,500 years old and some may date from the early Pleistocene. The birds from which these bones came were all larger than typical *C. pecuarius* suggesting that evolutionary divergence was relatively rapid.

The Wirebird was first described as a species in 1873⁷, but little behavioural and ecological information was obtained until the 1980s^{1,9,10}. St Helena's isolation has tended to deter scientific investigation of its biology and most published data on the species are contained in the anecdotal writings of island residents or the observations of very short-term visitors.

Habitat and distribution

The original habitat of the Wirebird is subject to controversy. The species currently inhabits pastureland and semi-desert fringes. Most early reports describe St

Helena as being heavily wooded and it has been suggested that the Wirebird originally utilised the floor of endemic Gumwood *Commidendrum robustum* woodland, which typically has a very open litter layer. This would, however, be highly atypical habitat for a plover and the present-day population shows no affinity for woodland. It is probable that some areas on the west side of the island always consisted of semi-desert and scrub⁴ and the more open parts were probably the original habitat of the ancestral Wirebirds. Such habitat could only have supported a very small population, which would have been unlikely to persist long enough to undergo substantial evolutionary divergence. It has recently been demonstrated, however, that, in the last Ice Age, sea-levels were considerably lower and St Helena would have possessed an extensive, gently sloping coastal plain (N. P. Ashmole pers. comm.), probably supporting a much larger population of plovers. Ironically, the Wirebird may have benefited from the widespread deforestation that led to the extinction of the other endemic birds.

Maximum deforestation had probably occurred by the mid- to late 19th century, there being only 162 acres (65 ha) of woodland in 1884⁴. It seems reasonable to assume that Wirebird numbers reached their peak at this time.

Some contraction of range undoubtedly occurred following the establishment of a fibre industry based on New Zealand Flax *Phormium tenax* from 1907–1966. During this period, up to 40% of the pasture recorded in 1884 was given over to flax production. Since then, some of the former plantations have been returned to pasture but many have been converted to forest, probably resulting in a net loss of Wirebird habitat. Some former habitat has also been lost to housing and amenity development during the 20th century, particularly in the north-west of the island.

A 14-month study in 1988–1989 revealed a fragmented breeding distribution north and west of St Helena's central ridge (Fig. 2)^{9,10}. Wirebirds utilise three broad habitat types: semi-desert (below 300 m), intermediate altitude grassland (300–500 m) and upland grassland (above 500 m). Intermediate grassland is the most important habitat. Wirebird density in intermediate grassland—0.36 birds per ha—was four times greater than that in semi-desert and three times that in upland grassland in 1988–1989. The most important breeding site—Deadwood Plain—in the north of the island is intermediate altitude grassland and supports 25–30% of the entire population. Population density closely matches that of the species' invertebrate prey—principally beetles and caterpillars—but is also influenced by topography, rainfall and vegetation structure. St Helena is predominantly mountainous but Wirebirds tend to avoid gradients steeper than 10%. Such topography characterises much of the upland grassland zone. It also prefers grass sward lower than 10 cm high. Higher rainfall in upland areas promotes



Deadwood Plain, from Flagstaff, 4 November 1989 (Neil McCulloch)



Prosperous Bay Plain with *Suaeda helena* scrub, 10 December 1989 (Neil McCulloch)



Adult St Helena Wirebird *Charadrius sanctaebelenae* (Neil McCulloch)



Downy young St Helena Wirebird *Charadrius sanctaebelenae* (Neil McCulloch)



Adult St Helena Wirebird *Charadrius sanctaebelenae* (Neil McCulloch)

lush year-round growth and contributes to low Wirebird usage. Although invertebrate density may be high in such areas, the tall, dense swards probably reduce their suitability for Wirebirds. It is also possible that the cooler, wetter climate at these elevations is less favourable for breeding.

Breeding

Adult Wirebirds are apparently extremely sedentary and strongly territorial for much of the year. The species breeds year-round but there is a distinct peak in nesting activity in the dry season (October–February). It appears to be monogamous and its breeding biology is typical of African sand plovers. Two eggs are laid in a simple scrape lined with dried grass blades and stolon fragments. Occasionally it nests among dry cow dung, as has frequently been recorded in Kittlitz's Plover. Incubation, in closely observed nests, is shared approximately equally between the sexes and takes c28 days. Wirebirds may incubate their

eggs more intensively than has been recorded in some studies of Kittlitz's Plover in southern Africa. This is possibly an adaptation to the generally cooler conditions prevailing in St Helena than on much of the African mainland. The Wirebird shares with Kittlitz's Plover the trait of covering the eggs with nest lining material when disturbed. Wirebirds defend their nests against all bird species but their reaction toward Common Mynahs is particularly strong, suggesting that this species is a significant predator.

In contrast to many other plover species, which often lead their chicks considerable distances to feeding areas, Wirebirds apparently raise their young almost exclusively within the nesting territory. The chicks fledge at c5 weeks but may remain with their parents for a further period of unknown length. Many newly fledged juveniles form loose flocks of up to 15 birds and wander widely around the island, being subject to frequent harassment from territorial adults. Numbers of first-year Wirebirds spend much time loafing near the few areas of permanent water in the north-east of the island.

The number of Wirebird nesting attempts subject to detailed study is very small. In consequence, estimates of breeding success must be regarded as broad approximations. Of 28 nests of known outcome observed during 1988–1989, 39% produced at least one chick. Hatching success appears to be high (95%) in nests unaffected by predation. Minimum fledging rate, based on re-sightings of juveniles ringed as downy chicks, was 23%. A combination of survival parameters for the various stages of the nesting cycle gave an overall estimate of survival rate from egg to fledging of 19%¹⁰. This figure is similar to that obtained for a population of Kittlitz's Plover in Zimbabwe¹³ but may be an overestimate.

Status and conservation

The Wirebird is regarded with affection by St Helenians and suffers no human persecution. The species' status remained little-known until the late 1980s, previous population estimates having been very varied and generally conflicting¹⁰. Three censuses undertaken in 1989 of areas known or suspected to support breeding birds suggested a total population of c450 birds. More recent surveys of the same sites by local observers indicate a decline of 25–30%, leading to the species being re-classified from Vulnerable to Endangered⁵.

The reasons for this apparently rapid reduction in Wirebird numbers are unclear. Predation and habitat degradation appear to be the most likely explanations. There is, however, no strong evidence of either having increased significantly since 1989.

Cats, dogs, rodents and mynahs are all abundant on St Helena but these have been present for several centuries without apparently causing such a decline in the Wirebird. The species retains a full repertoire of anti-predator behaviour including distraction displays and egg-covering. In recent years feral cats and dogs have been subject to more stringent control than ever before. Rats appear to be scarce at the major Wirebird sites, preferring more heavily vegetated areas. Mice can, on occasion, be significant predators of the eggs of ground-nesting birds⁸, but no evidence of this has been found on St Helena, although mice have been implicated in the extinction of some of the island's larger endemic invertebrates. No information exists on recent population trends in Common Mynah on St Helena or on this species' impact on Wirebird nests. Both factors require investigation.

The majority of Wirebirds occur on grazing land and are vulnerable to any major change in land use or management practices in such areas which reduce the abundance or availability of prey or nest sites. No such changes have occurred since 1989 and those few developments that have impinged upon Wirebird sites have been on a scale too small to cause a major reduction in Wirebird numbers.

The most optimistic scenario is that the apparent decline may be an artefact of variation in census methods. The situation does, however, require urgent investigation. To meet this need, a three-year study of Wirebird ecology, organised by the University of Reading, commenced in August 1998. The project, funded by the UK Government's Darwin Initiative, is being undertaken in close co-operation with the Environmental Conservation Section (ECS) of St Helena's Department of Agriculture and Forestry. The research programme includes further census work and will attempt to identify threats to the species through an intensive study of the Wirebird's breeding biology and ecological re-



Figure 2. Map of St Helena showing breeding distribution of the Wirebird (shaded) in 1988–1989.

quirements. An important component of the project will be the training of ECS staff in ornithological survey techniques and the establishment of a standardised monitoring programme for the Wirebird. The information obtained from this new study will be used to draw up a long-term species management plan.

The impact of European colonisation of tropical islands on indigenous avifaunas has been devastating. St Helena is an extreme example of this process. The Wirebird is the only remnant of a diverse community of landbirds that formerly existed on the island. It would be tragic if this species was also to disappear. St Helena is still very interesting biologically, despite the ravages of the past, and the Wirebird is widely recognised as an important component of that singularity. The species is featured on the island's coat of arms but, hopefully, increasing understanding of its biology will ensure that the Wirebird remains a living symbol of St Helena for centuries to come. ♀

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The nest and nestlings of Cape Verde Cane Warbler

Acrocephalus brevipennis

Peter Castell

Cinq nids de la Rousserolle du Cap-Vert *Acrocephalus brevipennis* ont été trouvés à Santiago, aux îles du Cap Vert, du 25 au 27 octobre 1998. Ils étaient construits dans des roseaux, suspendus à deux tiges à une hauteur de 1,3 à 2,3 m. Certains nids contenaient des oeufs et un nid contenait trois jeunes tout juste éclos. Les jeunes, jusqu'alors non décrits dans la littérature, étaient nus et noirâtres, avec des commissures jaune pâle et une bouche jaune-orange. Ils avaient une tache ovale noire de chaque côté de la langue. Apparemment, les oeufs éclosent simultanément.

During 25–27 October 1998, I found five nests of Cape Verde Cane Warbler *Acrocephalus brevipennis* in the São Jorge valley, on the island of Santiago, Cape Verde Islands.

Each nest was constructed in reeds and suspended between two main reedstems, whereas most *Acrocephalus* warblers with similar nests, such as Reed *A. scirpaceus* and Great Reed Warblers *A. arundinaceus* usually suspend their nests between at least three stems. The lowest nest was 1.3 m above the ground and the highest was 2.3 m. The nests were intermediate in size between those of Reed and Great Reed Warblers.

On 27 October, the five nests contained: (1) a complete clutch of two eggs, (2) ready for eggs (almost ready on 25 October), (3) two eggs (only one on 25 October), (4) a full clutch of three eggs, and (5) three newly hatched young.

Neither Cramp¹ nor Hazevoet² include a description of the nestlings of this species. They are naked with dark, almost black, skin, pale yellow gape flanges and orange-yellow mouths, and two oval black markings in the mouth, one on either side of the tongue. They closely resemble the nestlings of other species of *Acrocephalus*. All three young were identical in size and hatching was, therefore, synchronous. ♀

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1. Habitat of Cape Verde Cane Warbler *Acrocephalus brevipennis*, São Jorge valley, Santiago, Cape Verde Islands, October 1998 (Peter Castell)
2. Nest and eggs of Cape Verde Cane Warbler *Acrocephalus brevipennis* (Peter Castell)
3. Newly hatched nestlings of Cape Verde Cane Warbler *Acrocephalus brevipennis* (Peter Castell)



1



2



3

First records of Golden-tailed Woodpecker *Campethera abingoni* in Ivory Coast

Karl H. Falk and Volker Salewski

La capture au filet de deux pics à queue dorée *Campethera abingoni* en février 1995 et l'observation d'un autre individu au sud-ouest du parc national de Comoé en Mars 1998 constituent les premières données de l'espèce en Côte d'Ivoire. Ces éléments, ajoutés à de données antérieures sur le pic à queue dorée en Afrique de l'Ouest, aux connaissances acquises sur son mode de répartition et ses moeurs discrètes, conduisent les auteurs à supposer que cette espèce est sans doute plus abondante en Afrique de l'Ouest qu'on ne le pensait tout d'abord.

Golden-tailed Woodpecker *Campethera abingoni* principally occurs in northern and central parts of southern Africa^{1,11,16}. It inhabits most woodland types and forest edge. In more open areas, eg wooded grassland, it prefers the vicinity of rivers but always keeps to areas of dense trees and thickets, and riparian forests. It may also forage in dense but isolated trees within grasslands^{1,13,16}.

In West Africa, the species' distribution appears highly disjunct^{1,13,16}. It has been recorded in Senegambia^{2,5,9,12}, south-west Mali^{2,13} and northern Guinea^{2,11} but, apart from single reports in Ghana^{2,7,8} and Bénin^{2,6}, it is apparently absent between there and the northern Central African Republic. It reappears in southern Sudan and the adjacent north-east Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaïre) and north-west Uganda. According to existing lists^{1,15} the species has not been recorded in Ivory Coast.



Figure 1. Male Golden-tailed Woodpecker *Campethera abingoni*, probably subspecies *chrysura*, Comoé National Park, Ivory Coast, 15 February 1995 (Volker Salewski)

New records in Ivory Coast

During studies in south-west Comoé National Park in the north-east of the country from 1994–1998, we twice recorded Golden-tailed Woodpecker. On both occasions, the species was recorded in open Guinea-Savannah habitat near riparian forest fringing the Comoé river.

On 15 February 1995, an adult male (Fig. 1) was mist-netted near the junction of the Kongo and Comoé rivers, at 08° 48'N 03° 46'W. It was identified according to the following features: greenish upperparts with yellowish spotting or streaking, whitish underparts with heavy blackish streaks and blotches, especially on the throat and breast. The bird also had a short white supercilium, blackish streaked ear-coverts and a pale line above the moustachial stripe. The reddish forehead, crown and nape and the reddish moustachial stripe with blackish feather bases are characteristic of adult males^{1,13,16}.

The second individual (Fig. 2) was caught while mist-netting at 08° 45'N 03° 49'W, on 6 March 1998. It had the same characteristic features of the species as the bird described above. It was identified as a female or juvenile, because of its white-spotted black forehead, crown and moustachial stripe^{1,13,16}. The eye inclined more to dark brown than



Figure 2. Female or juvenile Golden-tailed Woodpecker *Campethera abingoni*, probably subspecies *chrysura*, Comoé National Park, Ivory Coast, 6 March 1998 (Karl H. Falk)

reddish in coloration, suggesting that it was juvenile^{4,13}.

Another female or juvenile was observed several days later in March 1998, in the same area of savannah as the first record, searching for food in a tree. It was identified according to its greenish spotted upperparts and heavily streaked underparts, which distinguished it from all other similar woodpecker species in the area¹⁶.

The blackish streaked ear-coverts^{4,16} and the more delicately spotted upperparts¹⁶ of the birds described here suggest that they were of the subspecies *C. a. chrysura*, which occurs, disjunctly, from Senegal to westernmost Uganda^{4,16}.

Discussion

These records of Golden-tailed Woodpecker are the first records in Ivory Coast^{1,15} and Comoé National Park³, and suggest that the species may occur more continuously than previously supposed through West Africa. It may be more abundant in this region than previously considered and may also occur within the large gaps between Senegambia / Guinea, the Central African Republic and southern Sudan. *C. a. chrysura*, as noted above, appears to be very patchily distributed throughout much of its range. The species is reported to be rather inconspicuous and unobtrusive, keeping to dense vegetation and remaining hidden in one place for long periods^{4,16}. Furthermore, ornithological activity in West Africa is significantly lower than in East and southern Africa. Thus, Golden-tailed Woodpecker may have been overlooked in several parts of the region.

No information concerning breeding is available from West Africa, with the exception of one report from The Gambia^{2,5,12}. If the bird we caught in March 1998 was a juvenile, it would suggest that the species probably breeds in Comoé National Park.

Acknowledgements

We thank F Bairlein, who enabled our work in Ivory Coast, and K E Linsenmair for permission to work in the field camp of the University of Würzburg, Germany. Earlier drafts of the article were improved by comments from H Wendeln and J Dierschke. ❧

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Notes on the breeding biology of Raso Lark *Alauda razae*

Peter Castell

L'écologie de l'Alouette de Raso *Alauda razae*, espèce endémique aux îles du Cap-Vert et globalement menacée, est peu connue. L'auteur présente des données, récoltées à l'occasion de visites à Raso pendant les mois de mars et octobre 1998, sur les exigences de l'espèce concernant l'habitat, certains aspects de son éco-éthologie, parmi lesquels la parade et l'accouplement, la construction du nid, la taille de ponte, la durée de la couvaison et les soins parentaux. Le jeune est décrit pour la première fois.

Introduction

Raso Lark *Alauda razae* is restricted to, and named after, the remote and uninhabited island of Raso in the Cape Verde Islands. The island covers c7 km² and, given the small amount of available habitat, the species is currently considered Endangered¹, although Ratcliffe *et al*², following a February 1998 survey (see below), recommend that this categorisation be revised to Critically Endangered. This species resembles a slightly smaller but more stoutly-built Skylark *Alauda arvensis* and is paler and greyer in coloration with a crest that is rarely apparent except when raised. The bill is longer and stouter. It is included in *BWP*² but the account is short and rather incomplete.

Together with three colleagues I slept out on the island during 23–26 March 1998, and I made subsequent day visits on 23 October and 29 October 1998. The weather was hot and occasionally windy in March and hot and very windy in October. In March we found no firm evidence of breeding, despite considerable watching. In October, I observed display, mating, nest-building, and found several nests and photographed eggs and young. The following notes summarise these observations.

Habitat

Approximately half of the island consists of steep-sloping and high rocky ground, unoccupied by larks. The remainder is a level or gently undulating plain, principally bare ground strewn with rocks with scattered patches of meagre grassy vegetation on sandy soil, usually in shallow valleys or slight depressions. Raso Larks occupy the entire plain but are especially associated with the vegetated areas, in which they feed and breed. The vegetation was brown in March and green and fresh in October. All nests found were in these vegetated areas and all were built at the base of, and partly screened by *Abutilon pannosum*. This plant is taller than the surrounding vegetation and has bright green leaves, some with yellow flowers. In both March and October, birds dug small holes in the soft sandy soil in these areas, presumably to expose food items.

Population

The population has been estimated at 40 pairs (1968), 20 pairs (1977 and 1981), at least 200 birds (1986) and c250 birds (1988, 1990, 1992). It is unknown whether the lowest number was the result of prolonged drought or an incomplete count¹. However, in February 1998, just prior to my first visit, Ratcliffe *et al*² found just 92 birds in a detailed census. In March, we saw only c40–50 birds, but did not attempt a population census, most in pairs but also in parties of 5–6 birds. Most birds were concentrated around a large sandy area with sparse brown vegetation, near the sea, but others were found in various areas of the plain. In October, pairs were well distributed throughout the plain. I estimate that there were 100 pairs, including several solitary males, probably with nearby females on nests.

Adult plumage

*BWP*² states that the sexes are similar in plumage. There is, however, a marked sexual dimorphism; males possess a distinctly longer and bulkier bill. The birds are always extremely confiding, making sexing very easy. Some birds, both males and females, are darker in coloration. In March, the birds ran around us as we lay in our sleeping bags and, in common with Iago Sparrow *Passeriagoensis*, would drink water put out for them in our bottle tops.

Breeding season

Most rainfall in the Cape Verdes is in August–November and the timing and quantity of local rainfall determine the breeding season for land birds, including Raso Lark. The birds apparently have two breeding seasons, a main one from September–November, and a less significant one in February–April. Droughts may persist for several seasons and breeding may be sporadic¹. We found no firm evidence of breeding in March (but see section on song) or recently occupied nests, despite an extensive search. On 23 October, I saw no flying young but found three young aged 12–13 days by their nest. Taking into account an estimated incubation period of 13 days, an egg-laying period of three



Figure 1. Habitat of Raso Lark *Alauda razae* (green vegetated area) (P. Castell)



Figure 2. Adult male Raso Lark *Alauda razae* (N. Williams)



Figure 3. Nest of Raso Lark *Alauda razae* containing three eggs (P. Castell)



Figure 4. Young Raso Lark *Alauda razae* aged 12–13 days (P. Castell)

days and a nest-building period of five days, nest-building commenced on c20 September. On both visits in October birds were nest-building, two nests contained eggs and several nests were empty; there were broken pieces of eggshell in some nests, implying predation. I found 11 recent nests, and many fresh scrapes in October and, judging by the amount of song, was the peak breeding period in this particular year.

Song, display and mating

In March we heard no song on the first two days of our visit. There was light rain in the night of 24 March and a few birds sang briefly the following day. Rather surprisingly, considering the time of year, there was heavy rain during the night of 25 March and, the following morning, several males sang briefly from rocks and from the ground. We did not see songflighting.

In October, males were singing throughout the plain, especially near vegetated areas. The song recalls that of Skylark and is delivered not only from the ground but from

prominent rocks and also in hovering rising flight (commonly up to c10 m above ground), usually in close proximity (and often immediately above) a female. Males will perform a song flight and then land alongside the female. On 23 October I observed a pair on the ground. A second male approached the female but was chased away for at least 150 m by the other male. The pair then flew c 100 m and landed on the ground in an area of gravel and small rocks. With wings partially opened, the female quivered its entire body for c30 sec before the male ran forward and the pair copulated for c5 sec. Following this, the female shook her wings and both birds flew c30 m to a green vegetated area. From a distance of c25 m I watched the female grab a beakful of dry grass stems and the pair flew to a half-built nest. Approximately half of the grass was lost during the flight. The pair had copulated c30 m from the nest.

Nest-building

*BWP*² provides no information on the role of the sexes in nest-building. In addition to the observation described

above, I watched another female nest-building. The male was in close attendance, while the female collected materials, but did not assist.

Nest

Nests of desert-dwelling larks are usually a scrape in the ground, constructed by the birds, alongside or partly screened by a rock or small bush, with a rampart of stones or pieces of dried earth at the open side. In contrast, Raso Lark nests closely resemble those of Skylark, having no rampart. A round scrape c10 cm wide and c5 cm deep in the centre is made in soft sandy ground. The scrape is lined with a thick pad of dry grass stems. Some nests contained a few feathers (possibly wind-blown?) in the lining. All were at the base of, and usually partially screened by, *Abutilon* plants, commonly c15 cm tall.

Breeding territory

As demonstrated above, male Raso Larks appear to defend territories near their nests and females. I did not measure the distances between nests but several were within c150 m of each other. The scattered vegetation, required for both feeding and breeding, is clearly the most crucial factor in the delimitation of territory.

Eggs and clutch size

Fig. 3 illustrates a nest containing three warm eggs on 29 October. The eggs are typical of a lark and closely resemble those of Woodlark *Lullula arborea*. They are subelliptical, smooth and glossy, with a greyish white background and dark brown markings, heavily concentrated at the larger end. On 29 October, another nest contained one warm egg, that was clearly being incubated. The markings on this egg were chocolate-brown and densely concentrated at the larger end. Four other nests contained fragments of unhatched eggshells. The brood of three young, found on 23 October, suggests that most clutches contain 1–3 eggs.

Incubation and the role of the sexes

*BWP*² states that the incubation period is 13 days, undertaken by both sexes (based on information from the 1890s), but that confirmation is required. This period is consistent with the incubation period of other larks. In October, only the female was found close to the nest containing the one warm egg. On three visits to the nest containing three eggs, both birds were seen near the nest when approached; I was unable to determine which member of the pair had been incubating, but the female was always much closer to the nest than the male.

Young

See Fig. 4 of the Raso Lark aged 12–13 days on 23 October. It has a well-developed chestnut-brown tail and a promi-

nent white line between the bill and the eye. *BWP*² provides no details of the bare parts of the young, but these are illustrated in Fig. 4. This bird had no trace of down and was yet unable to fly. The gape flanges were white and the mouth orange-yellow with five black markings inside the mouth, three on the tongue (two at the base and one at the tip) and one at the inside tip of each mandible; the tongue spurs were white and prominent. This five-spot pattern is usual among young of Western Palearctic larks², but the markings on this Raso Lark were longer, thinner and less distinct than those in other young larks when recently hatched. It is unknown whether the markings are rounder, darker, and more closely resemble those of other young larks when the birds are recently hatched, but this seems possible.

Tending of the young

Again, *BWP*² offers no information on the role of the sexes in this respect. I was first attracted to the young bird described above by an adult male Raso Lark. As I approached a vegetated area, the male appeared a few metres away from me and ran backwards and forwards in an agitated manner with an erect crest. As I watched, a female and three young fluttered out of the vegetation c1 m from an obviously recently occupied nest. Both adults fed the young on unidentified items including, on one occasion, a long-winged insect. Among the various lark species breeding in the Western Palearctic, feeding and tending of the young is typically undertaken by both sexes, where known. Raso Lark appears to behave similarly.

Predation

As stated previously, four nests contained fragments of unhatched eggshells. Adult Raso Larks, in common with other larks, would almost certainly remove hatched eggshells from their nests. In October, a pair of Brown-necked Raven *Corvus ruficollis*, a potential predator, was showing considerable interest in the vegetated areas.

Conclusions

This paper provides new information on the breeding biology of the little-studied Raso Lark. Some aspects, such as role of the sexes in nest-building, incubation and tending of the young, require longer term study.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Dr Colin Harrison, who made valuable comments on an earlier draft of this paper, and Roy Vickery, Curator of Flowering Plants at the Natural History Museum in London, for identifying the plant species most associated with Raso Lark nests. 🌱

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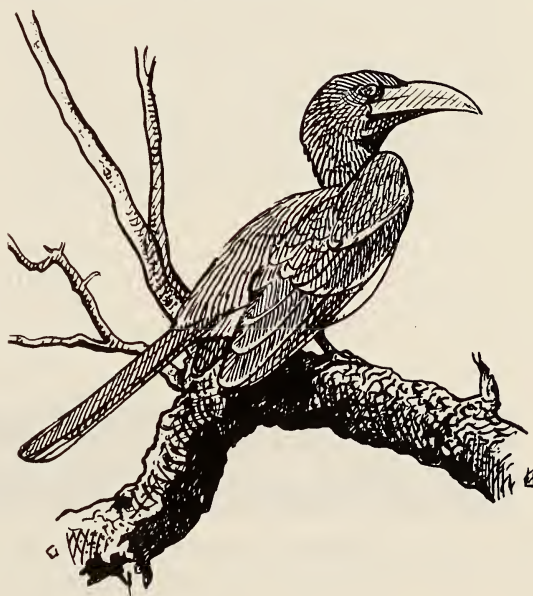
Patrick Claffey

Le Calao Pygmée est très sporadiquement distribué en Afrique Occidentale du Sénégal jusqu'au Nigeria, à l'exception du Togo. Fry *et al*¹ le dit présent au Bénin dans le texte mais l'espèce est omise de la carte de distribution, et l'auteur n'en a retrouvé aucune référence dans ses recherches dans les archives depuis le siècle passé. Néanmoins ces deux observations récentes, l'une dans la Forêt Classée de la Lama au sud du pays, et l'autre dans un site de forêt secondaire au centre, confirment la présence de l'espèce en République du Bénin. En même temps il y a quelques observations sur le comportement d'une espèce qui, à cause de son habitat préféré, n'a été que relativement peu observé.

Fry *et al*¹ report, somewhat ambiguously, the occurrence of Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill *Tockus camurus* from Bénin. Although Bénin is mentioned in the introductory text it is omitted from the distribution map. No records were apparently available at that time to support its occurrence in the country. Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire² did not include the species on their Republic of Bénin list, but the error also appears in Kemp³ who considered its distribution to include Bénin, and it is possible that this is the source of the *Birds of Africa*⁴ error as Kemp's papers were used extensively in preparing the Bucerotidae accounts. Fry *et al*¹ state that it is an "endemic, resident of lowland forest" species. According to published information it appears to occur, sporadically and sparsely distributed through suitable habitat, from Sierra Leone to Nigeria, with the exception of Togo and Bénin^{1,3,4,5}. Two recent field records for the Republic of Bénin are, therefore, of interest and mean that the species can be unequivocally stated to occur in the country.

P. Coubeou reported *Tockus camurus* from the Forêt Classée de la Lama, (6°55'N–07°00'N and 02°04'E–02°12'E), sometime in April–October 1994^{7,9}. This is apparently the first Bénin record. No details are included in the report and I am unsure of its authenticity as the species was not recorded by Waltert & Mühlberg⁸, during a detailed study of the same area which revealed the presence of two other species of forest hornbills—African Pied Hornbill *Tockus fasciatus* and the rare White-crested Hornbill *T. albocristatus*. *Tockus fasciatus semifasciatus* has also been recorded in Lama Forest⁹ and in the Forêt Classée de Ouari Maro in central Bénin (Claffey in prep.). Elgood *et al*³ note that *Tockus camurus* is 'heard more often than seen' and it is possible that it has been overlooked in both Bénin and Togo.

I recorded *Tockus camurus* on 19 and 25 October 1998, a single bird on both occasions, in a small area of old secondary forest c5 km south-east of Bétérou (09°12'N 02°16'E). This is considerably further north



Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill *Tockus camurus* by Mark Andrews

than Coubeou's observation, in an area where there is a little remaining forest and much secondary outlying savanna growth, such as at this site. The upperparts were distinctively brown, with white spots in the median-coverts, a feature which I noted on the second visit. The underparts were white. The species is unmistakable because of its red bill. The bird seen on 19 October was probably a female as there was black in the tip of the bill.

The behaviour of the bird is also of interest and certainly explains why it is easily overlooked in dense growth. I noted it as 'squirrel-like' as it climbed branches in the upper level of the trees in a 'flattened' position, parallel to the branches. The long tail was held in the same manner, adding to this impression. Its movements were very agile, and, without viewing the bird through binoculars, could

easily have been overlooked as a large squirrel.

Given this description and the habitat preferences of the species, 'extending into secondary forest and isolated forest patches'⁴, these records confirm the presence of *Tockuscamurus* in some of the small remaining forest patches in the Republic of Bénin.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to Dr R J Dowsett & F Dowsett-Lemaire for comments on a first draft of this note. ⁵

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The Kilum-Ijim Forest Project: biodiversity monitoring in the montane forests of Cameroon

Fiona Maisels^{a,b} and Philip Forbese^a

La forêt de Kilum-Ijim est une importante aire pour les oiseaux, dans la province du Nordouest du Cameroun, et une partie des montagnes Camerounaise EBA. Quatre espèces qui sont considérées comme vulnérables par le BirdLife International viennent en ce lieu: *Tauraco bannermani*, *Platysteira (peltata) latincincta*, *Ploceus bannermani* et *Malaconotus gladiator*; il ya également deux autres espèces qui sont prémenacées: *Andropadus montanus* et *Bradypterus (lopezi) bangwaensis*. Les buts et résultats du projet concernant la forêt de Kilum-Ijim sont décrit ici.

Introduction

The Cameroon highlands

Data collected on different taxa demonstrate the Cameroon highlands to be of high biological importance¹⁰. The montane forests of this region are considered to be a priority area for conservation on a global scale and the area is classified as critical in a hierarchy of priority listings of global Endemic Bird Areas^{10,18}. The current Important Bird Areas (IBAs) criteria⁶, include the Cameroon mountains in the Afrotropical Highlands biome which corresponds closely with phytchorion VIII of White's *Vegetation of Africa*²¹, within which are found many species of global conservation concern.

Endemic Bird Areas and Important Bird Areas

Bird species with breeding ranges of less than 50,000 km² (restricted-range species) tend to occur on islands or in isolated patches of habitat such as montane forests¹⁰. The boundaries of areas with concentrations of restricted-range species have been delineated by BirdLife International, and the areas so defined called Endemic Bird Areas (EBAs)^{10,18}. The area of EBAs covers 2% of the earth's land surface, but contains the entire ranges of 20% of the world's bird species. Eighty-five percent of EBAs have one or more threatened or extinct restricted-range species¹⁸.

Using this approach, the Cameroon mountains were identified as a high priority for conservation. Twenty-seven bird species are confined to this EBA, the second highest of any EBA in Africa (after the Albertine Rift Mountains), and ten of these 27 species are listed as globally threatened¹⁸. Most EBAs vary in size from a few square kilometres to more than 100,000 km². In many cases it is not practical to address conservation efforts at the EBA as a whole. The aim of BirdLife's Important Bird Areas (IBA) programme is 'to identify and protect a network of sites at a biogeographic scale, critical for long-term viability of naturally occurring bird populations, across the range of those bird species for which a sites-based approach is appropriate⁶'. The IBA programme selects sites based on the presence of globally

threatened species, the presence of restricted-range species, the presence of an assemblage of species restricted to a particular biome, and the presence of congregations of waterbirds, seabirds or migratory species. Based on the application of these criteria, the Kilum-Ijim forest in the Cameroon mountains EBA has been identified as an Important Bird Area, because it is the only viable fragment remaining of the Bamenda Highlands section of this EBA (Table 1). Conservation of the Kilum-Ijim forest is critical for the survival of at least two bird species.

The Kilum-Ijim Forest Project

The Bamenda Highlands is an upland area within the NorthWest Province of Cameroon, and is recognised as a discrete biological unit by WWF²³. The Kilum-Ijim Forest is a relatively well-studied area within these highlands, and the largest remaining patch of montane forest in West Africa (Fig. 1). Since 1987, BirdLife International has been working to conserve this forest within the framework of the integrated conservation and development project—Kilum-Ijim Forest Project, formerly the Kilum Mountain Forest Project—and, subsequently, its sister project the Ijim Mountain Forest Project. The total area enclosed by the Kilum-Ijim forest boundary is 200 km², of which approximately half is montane forest and the rest degraded montane grassland, various types of scrubland, and a small area of Afro-subalpine grassland (of high conservation importance) at the summit of Mt. Oku (Mt. Kilum)^{5,12,13,16,19,20}. The area supports many endemic taxa, including mammals, birds, herpetofauna and plants^{1,2,8,9,22}.

The Kilum-Ijim Project overall goal is that: *representative areas of the Cameroon montane forest biome are conserved in the long term.*

The Project purpose is: *the biodiversity, extent, and ecological processes of the Kilum-Ijim Forest are maintained and the forest is used sustainably by the local communities.*

Toward these ends, our broad conservation goals are that:

1. The extent and quality of the montane habitats

for which the Kilum-Ijim Forest is of outstanding conservation interest are improved or maintained.

2. The key species important for ecological processes within each habitat, such as forest regeneration and food webs, are maintained.
3. Populations of rare species of Kilum-Ijim Forest are maintained, and, if appropriate, increased.

Of the 27 species of bird endemic to the Cameroon Mountains EBA, 15 (55%) are found in the Kilum-Ijim Forest¹⁸. Two are strictly endemic to the Bamenda Highlands: Bannerman's Turaco *Tauraco bannermani* and Banded (Black-throated) Wattle-Eye *Platysteira (peltata) laticincta*, for which the Kilum-Ijim forests are the last stronghold¹. One species, Green-breasted Bush-shrike *Malaconotus gladiator*, is very uncommon at the site and has only been recorded in 1984 and 1998⁹. These three species and Bannerman's Weaver *Ploceus bannermani* are listed as Vulnerable, and Cameroon (Montane) Greenbul *Andropadus montanus* and Cameroon Bracken (Evergreen-Forest) Warbler *Brachypterus (lopezi) bangwaensis* as Near-threatened on the list of globally threatened species¹⁹. The endemic bird species are listed in Table 1, with their degree of endemicity, Red Data category, and IBA listings^{18,19}. Finally, Lake Oku qualifies for IBA category A4 (congregations) for Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, as the 1% threshold for this species in Africa is 500 individuals⁹. Up to 1,000 birds are regularly seen on the lake during the dry season¹².

Apart from the ornithological value of the site, the forest supports populations of mammals and amphibians of conservation importance. Six small mammal species are endemic to Mount Oku²². Preuss's Guenon *Cercopithecus preussi* (Endangered)—a species of monkey endemic to the

Cameroon Highlands, Coopers' Mountain Squirrel *Paraxerus cooperi* (Vulnerable)—also endemic to the Cameroon Highlands, the Oku Clawed Toad *Xenopus* sp. (endemic to Lake Oku and nearby forest), and Steindachners' Puddle Frog *Phrynobatrachus steindachneri* (endemic to the Bamenda Highlands)^{9,22} all occur in the forest. Endemic plants include the strict endemics *Doryalis* sp. nov., (a newly discovered small tree), *Kniphofia reflexa* (Liliaceae), and at least two species of *Eriocaulon*, all of which are endemic to the Kilum-Ijim forest area and / or including sites a few kilometres from the forest boundary (unpubl. data).

Threats and solutions

The area is a remnant of the once extensive montane forest that, until relatively recently, covered the Bamenda Highlands and much of the Cameroon mountain chain. Most of this has now been cleared and converted to farm and grazing land. By 1986 the forest had been reduced to 50% of its 1963 extent^{5,13}. Kilum-Ijim forest is thus essentially an island of montane forest surrounded by a sea of cultivation; mainly maize, potatoes and beans. Tree species growing outside the forest boundary are mostly exotic fruit or timber trees such as avocado, eucalyptus and cypress.

The Kilum and Ijim Forest Projects were established to halt forest loss and help provide sustainable alternatives to forest clearance. Thus, the Project has been working to improve farmers' income by rural development techniques, so that the need to clear natural forest is removed. Programmes include encouraging native tree species planting in farms, improvement of crop yields by extension work on contour farming, improved crop varieties, fruit tree grafting etc. This has been extremely effective: the Kilum-

Ijim forest now has a boundary that has been agreed in collaboration with the surrounding communities, and conversion of forest to farmland ceased in 1992. In the future, it is envisaged that the forest will be managed by the local communities with technical advice and input from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MINEF). This is currently being facilitated by the Kilum-Ijim Forest Project. However, other serious human influences on montane forest are still active: forest fire, and the use of the forest for grazing animals, especially goats, which browse on regenerating trees. Other, more subtle human activities

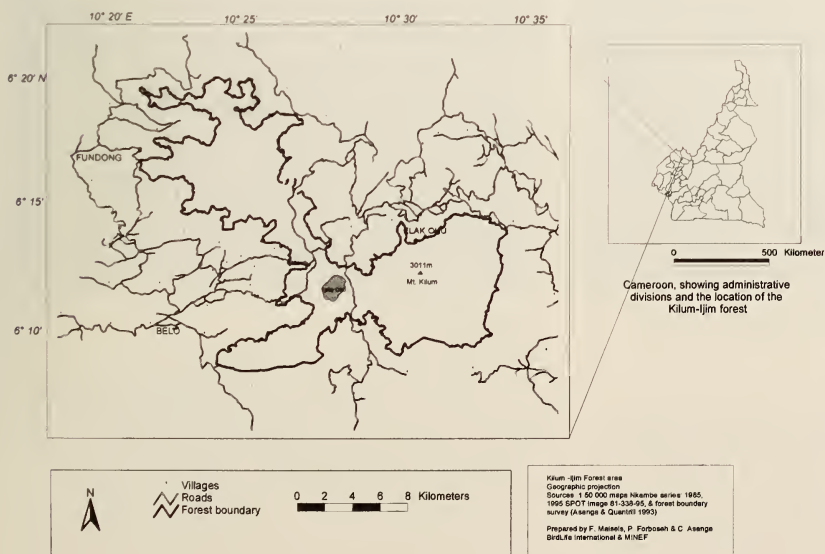


Figure 1. Cameroon, showing administrative divisions and the location of the Kilum-Ijim forest.

Table 1. Restricted-range bird species of the Kilum-Ijim Forests

The Cameroon Mountains EBA has a critical conservation priority¹⁶. The bird species which occur in the Kilum-Ijim forests and are endemic to this EBA are here ranked in order of overall conservation importance according to the following criteria.

Endemicity: BH: endemic to the Bamenda Highlands only. CA: Endemic to the Cameroon montane archipelago.

Degree of threat: status in *Birds to Watch 2*⁶, (the IUCN listing), where VU = Vulnerable and NT = Near-Threatened. Lc = Least Concern.

IBA: which IBA categories does the species fall into? A1 = species of conservation concern; A2 = species of restricted range; A3 = biome restricted assemblage¹⁸.

KIFP is the proposed order of conservation importance of the various species.

Species	Endemicity	Degree of threat	IBA	KIFP
Bannerman's Turaco <i>Tauraco bannermani</i>	BH	VU*	A1, A2, A3	1
Banded (Black-throated) Wattle-Eye <i>Platysteira (peltata) laticincta</i>	BH	VU*	A1, A2, A3	1
Bannerman's Weaver <i>Ploceus bannermani</i>	CA	VU	A1, A2, A3	2
Green-breasted Bush-Shrike <i>Malaconotus gladiator</i>	CA	VU	A1, A2, A3	2
Cameroon (Montane) Greenbul <i>Andropadus montanus</i>	CA	NT	A1, A2, A3	3
Cameroon Bracken (Evergreen-Forest) Warbler <i>Bradypterus (lopezi) bangwaensis</i>	CA	NT	A1, A2, A3	3
Green Longtail <i>Urolais epichlora</i>	CA	Lc	A2, A3	4
Little Olive-back <i>Nesocharis shelleyi</i>	CA	Lc	A2, A3	4
Mountain Robin-Chat <i>Cossypha isabellae</i>	CA	Lc	A2, A3	4
Yellow-breasted Boubou <i>Laniarius atroflavus</i>	CA	Lc	A2, A3	4
Brown-backed (Chubb's) Cisticola <i>Cisticola (chubbii) discolor</i>	CA	Lc	A2, A3	4
Cameroon Olive Greenbul <i>Phyllastrephus poensis</i>	CA	Lc	A2, A3	4
Cameroon (Blue-headed) Sunbird <i>Nectarinia oritis</i>	CA	Lc	A2, A3	4
Cameroon Olive Pigeon <i>Columba sjostedti</i>	CA	Lc	A2, A3	4
Moutain Greenbul <i>Andropadus tephrolaemus</i>	CA	Lc	A2, A3	4

*It is probable that in the forthcoming *Birds to Watch 3*, both Bannerman's Turaco and Banded (Black-throated) Wattle-eye will be placed in the Endangered category.

are the selective removal of plant and animal species for food, medicine, carving and firewood. Some of the larger bodied (hunted) mammals have become locally extinct and most of the others are now extremely rare in the area. Some species of plant have been over-exploited and their populations drastically reduced.

Ecological monitoring

To follow these changes in biodiversity, and to provide information on the sustainability of the various forest uses, an ecological monitoring programme was commenced in 1994, the purpose of which was to provide information for the development and updating of the forest management plans, and to determine whether the conservation objectives of the project were being met. The major tree and bird species were monitored on a regular basis^{14,15}. The original programme has continued, with some modifications and additions¹⁷. Several components are measured: forest type / habitat structure; key animal indicators (principally birds); human impact on forest condition; and the overall extent of the different habitats. The programme investigates the forest on three scales.

The Bamenda Highlands landscape scale:

Very large-scale vegetation changes are monitored by regular analysis of satellite images, which also provide information concerning forest cover change over the Bamenda Highlands, outside the forest boundary.

The local landscape scale:

A system of photographic monitoring has been established, which follows changes in vegetation over areas that can be easily photographed from fixed points, at two-year intervals.

The individual species scale:

Essentially, much of the work is performed using a total of 150 permanent 20 x 20 m plots randomly placed within each major vegetation type. In half of these plots, trees are identified, measured and tagged, seedlings counted (to assess success of forest regeneration) and habitat structure assessed. In the other half, only trees of >10 cm dbh are measured and tagged, and the individual trees are not tagged, but mapped, so that forest users will not cease their normal activities. The measurements will be repeated at three-year intervals. Bird density has been regularly monitored in the known vegetation types (using highly skilled local field assistants, who identify and estimate the distance to calling and singing birds). Human activities are monitored by estimating density of signs such as snares, and debarked and felled trees.

Conclusions

Conservation of an important area of West African montane forest is at present assured by co-operation between BirdLife International, MINEF-Cameroon, the traditional authorities of the area, and the village communities using the forest for important forest-based resources such as water, fuelwood, and medicinal plants. This co-operation takes the form of facilitating Community Forest Management, rural development, and operating a biodiversity monitoring programme.



1



2



3



4



5



6

1. Banded Wattle-eye *Platysteira (peltata) laticincta* in the hand (BirdLife International)
- 2 & 3. Banded Wattle-eye *Platysteira (peltata) laticincta* at the first-ever nest to be discovered, Mt. Oku / Kilum, Cameroon (C. Parrot / BirdLife International)

4. Banded Wattle-eye *Platysteira (peltata) laticincta* (BirdLife International)
5. Bannerman's Turaco *Tauraco bannermani* (BirdLife International)
6. Bannerman's Turaco *Tauraco bannermani* on nest, Mt. Oku, Cameroon (Roger Fotso / BirdLife International)

BirdLife intends to continue the monitoring programme long after the official Project closes (mid-year 2000), in order to remain informed about the results of community forest management on the long-term conservation of biodiversity of the forest.

Acknowledgements

The Kilum-Ijim Forest Project is a joint programme of BirdLife International and the Ministry of Environment and Forestry of Cameroon (MINEF). The project is currently funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Dutch Government, and the British Department for International Development (DfID).

We would particularly like to thank the past and present technicians of the Ecomonitoring programme: Kemei Moses Baba, Keming Ernest Chung, Ndong Bass Innocent Wultof, Toh Loah Clement and Felix Bafon who collected and entered all the data, and Clive McKay, who established the original Ecomonitoring programme and trained the staff in plant and bird recognition, and in the techniques of careful data collection and entry. Chris Bowden, Robert Dowsett, Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire, and Roger Fotso provided additional staff training.

Lincoln Fishpool read the manuscript and suggested changes and clarifications. All the staff of the Kilum-Ijim Forest Project helped enormously, in logistics, helpful discussions, and through their good team spirit and friendship. 

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Ayres' Hawk-Eagle *Hieraaetus (dubius) ayresi* sightings in Cameroon

William S. Clark

De nouvelles observations de l'Aigle d'Ayres *Hieraaetus (dubius) ayresi* au Cameroun sont rapportées. En 1998, l'espèce a été vue huit fois dans le sud-ouest du pays. L'auteur estime que certaines mentions de l'Aigle de Cassin *Spizaetus africanus* de cette région pourraient concerner des Aigles d'Ayres. Ce dernier passerait plus de temps à découvert et serait, de ce fait, plus à même d'être observé. Il a les ailes plus longues, la queue plus courte et barrée de gris, les axillaires uniformément noires, et deux petites taches blanches à la base de l'aile.

The status of Ayres' Hawk-Eagle *Hieraaetus (dubius) ayresi* in Cameroon is considered uncertain⁵. Recently, however, records of singles in Lobéké reserve, in the east of the country (*Bull. ABC* 5: 70), near Ngaondaba (N Borrow pers comm), and of two at Mt. Kupe¹ have been reported. There are also records from neighbouring Nigeria, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Congo²⁻⁴.

During month-long raptor fieldwork in south-west Cameroon (encompassing visits to Nyasoso, Mt. Kupe, Korup National Park, and Mt. Oku), in January 1998, I made eight separate sight records of *H. ayresi* (Table 1). It is possible that two of these involved the same adult; nevertheless, the species would appear to be a rather common raptor in this area.

The eagles varied in plumage coloration from a whitish juvenile (one, Figs 1 & 2) to medium dark (5-6, Figs 3-5) to dark (one) adults. All adults exhibited the two white 'landing lights' at the base of the forewing (see Fig 3).

None of the birdwatching trip reports I used for reference materials for my visit mention *H. ayresi*. However, they did mention frequent sightings of Cassin's Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus africanus*. I did not identify *S. africanus* during my fieldwork period, despite watching for it on at least eight full days in areas where this eagle has been reported. I do not doubt that *africanus* is present, but the frequency of my sighting *H. ayresi* and the fact that this species had not been reported previously suggest that

some of the alleged sightings of Cassin's may have been Ayres' Hawk-Eagle. A record of African Hawk-Eagle *Hieraaetus spilogaster* on Mt. Kupe in January 1994 (unpubl. trip report), must surely have been an *H. ayresi*.

Observers in south-west Cameroon and elsewhere in central African rainforests are advised to look carefully at any possible *S. africanus* to ensure that it is not an *H. ayresi*. I suspect, because of the aerial nature of the last-named species (a habit not shared by *africanus*), that *ayresi* is likely to be more frequently observed. *H. ayresi* is an aerial hunter and spends much of the day on the wing, whereas *africanus* limits its flying to occasional soaring for short periods, behaviour similar to many *Accipiters*, and to low-level flights to change watchpoints.

The main differences between the two species are: (1) their proportions—*ayresi* has longer wings and a shorter tail; (2) their uppertails—barred grey on *ayresi* and brown on *africanus*; (3) their axillaries—uniformly black on *africanus*, and speckled black-and-white on *ayresi*; and (4) the two white 'landing lights' on the inner forewings—present on *ayresi* (Fig. 3), absent on *africanus*.

I prefer the name 'Ayres' Eagle' to 'Ayres' Hawk-Eagle' as the latter implies a forest eagle that behaves like a hawk, as is the case with members of the genus *Spizaetus*, but this name is inappropriate for *H. ayresi* and other aerial eagles in *Hieraaetus*, such as Booted *H. pennatus*, Rufous-bellied *H. kienerii*, and Little Eagles *H. morphnoides*.

The author would be very interested to receive any photographs of *S. africanus*, especially of birds in flight. These can be sent to the address below (see also p. 92).

Table 1. Sightings of Ayres' Hawk-Eagle *Hieraaetus ayresi* in Cameroon in January 1998

Area of sighting	Date	Age	Plumage
Tombel	1 January 1998	Ad	Medium dark
Nyasoso	3 January 1998	Ad	Medium dark
5 km south of Nyasoso	4 January 1998	Juv	Light
1 hour east of Kumba	6 January 1998	Ad	Medium dark
North of Loum	20 January 1998	Ad	Medium dark
Nyasoso	21 January 1998	Ad	Medium dark
Lake Barombi	23 January 1998	Ad	Dark
Buea	25 January 1998	Ad	Medium dark

Acknowledgements

I thank the National Aviary in Pittsburgh for the travel grant to undertake fieldwork in Cameroon. C. Bowden, R. Demey and R. J. Dowsett provided helpful comments on previous drafts of the manuscript. ☺

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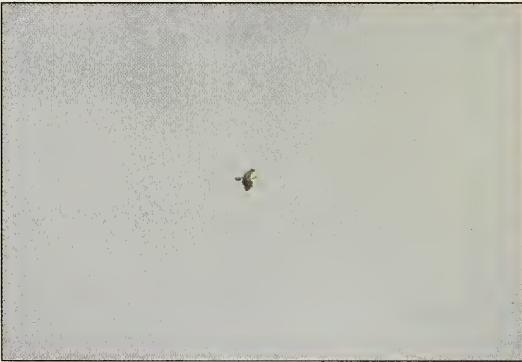
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1



2



3



4



5

1. Ayres' Hawk-Eagle *Hieraaetus ayresi*. Most likely a juvenile because of the completely white head; tawny-buff head and underparts that have faded to whitish. Note long wings and short tail. Cameroon, January 1998 (Bill Clark)
2. Ayres' Hawk-Eagle *Hieraaetus ayresi*. Most likely a juvenile because of the completely white head. Cameroon, January 1998 (Bill Clark)
3. Adult Ayres' Hawk-Eagle *Hieraaetus ayresi*. Note white 'landing lights'. Cameroon, January 1998 (Bill Clark)
4. Adult Ayres' Hawk-Eagle *Hieraaetus ayresi*. Note long wings, short tail, and mottled axillaries. Cameroon, January 1998 (Bill Clark)
5. Adult Ayres' Hawk-Eagle *Hieraaetus ayresi*. Wing-tips almost reach tail tip. South Africa, November 1998 (Bill Clark)

Dams as new habitat in West African savannah

Patrick Claffey

Des observations d'oiseaux ont été faites dans le petit lac barrage à Kakikoka dans la province des terres du sud de Borgou province, au Bénin de septembre 1997 à mai 1998. De nombreux séjours ont été fait pendant la saison sèche (Octobre–Avril). Soixante dix espèces ont été enregistrées à proximité du barrage, incluant six nouvelles espèces dans la liste Bénin: *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, *Gallinula chloropus*, *Microparva capensis*, *Charadrius pecuarius*, *Charadrius forbesi* et *Calidris ferruginea*.

Waterbirds have always been difficult to find in the dry savannah of West Africa, only occurring in the small patches of suitable habitat, which are scarce in the dry season and often inaccessible during the rains. However, in West Africa, as occurred previously in southern Africa, habitat is increasing with the building of new dams. The increase in the waterbird population can be observed in a very short period of time, and the dam under study here has already been visited by several species previously unrecorded in northern Benin^{3, 12, 13, 19} or the whole country⁴.

The small dam at Kakikoka (09°01'N 02°16'E) in Borgou Province is one of several projects of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Bénin. Constructed in 1995, it is c850 m in length and a little over 200 m wide. It has been designed to meet the needs of the semi-nomadic pastoralist Fulani or Peul people who lead their herds, often up to 500 cattle, and a smaller number of sheep and goats, on transhumance through the northern savannahs of several West African countries.

A remark in *Waterbirds*⁵ prompted me to undertake a simple study of this small waterbody from September 1997–May 1998. Most visits were during the dry season (October–April) when the water is lowest and the area around the dam most accessible. I visited the site, often several times a month, to count some of the species present there.

The western end of the dam, where the feeder stream enters, is shallow, probably no more than 1 m deep, and is quickly colonised by *Nymphaea caerulea*¹⁶ during the dry season, becoming almost totally clogged by the end of April when the water is at its lowest. There is also a reedbed at this end. The shores of the dam are bare laterite during much of the dry season. However, several species of rushes and grass are beginning to take root, as well as varied savannah flora after the first rains. There are small areas of muddy shore which attract a number of waders, particularly on spring passage. The wall and the eastern rocky shore are favourite resting and bathing places for several hundred Cattle Egrets which join a large roost of c5,000 birds on the Ouémé River to the south-west of the dam. To the east, behind the wall, there is a large area of savannah.

Geographical location and climate

The dam is situated 5 km south of the village of Kakikoka, in the Guinea savannah of central Bénin. This vegetation covers much of the country, from 07°–11°N. The annual rainfall is c1,200 mm with the heaviest rains in July–September. Monthly mean temperatures are c26°C, with a maximum of 37°C in February–March.

The area immediately surrounding the dam is heavily cultivated. Crops include yam *Dioscorea* spp., cassava *Manihot esculenta*, rice *Oryza sativa*, *Pennisetum americanum*, cotton *Gossypium* spp. and groundnut *Arachis hypogaea*. However, due to the variety of habitats present—woodland, riparian vegetation, small areas of dense forest, and farmland—it is still relatively rich in bird species and I have recorded 300 species here over a 10-year period.

Species of particular interest on the Kakikoka Dam

Clearly many of the species observed on the dam were expected at this type of waterbody—herons, bitterns, ducks, waders and rails. Many others on the list are common in the area and are coincidental or only distantly dependent on the water. A full list of the species noted within the perimeter of the dam is given in the appendix. However, the following are certainly the most significant in terms of being rarities, new to the area, significant Palearctic or intra-African migrants, or new Bénin records. The first sentence of each species account describes the species' overall status in Bénin.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

New Bénin record. Single male on 12 September 1997. Two pairs in full breeding plumage on 19–20 February 1998. Three birds in breeding plumage on 8–15 April 1998. Two birds still present on 15 May 1998. No sign of any young but breeding seems probable given the species' behaviour elsewhere in West Africa. The species was apparently recorded on Lac Nakoué in south Bénin in March 1997. This is a significant exploitation of a small new area of suitable habitat².

Long-tailed Cormorant *Phalacrocorax africanus*
Common resident throughout. Up to 20 on the dam at any time.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*

Single in the reeds at the stream end of the dam on 20 February 1998. Few records, although it is probably not uncommon and has been previously recorded both in the north, on the Terou River¹³, and in the south, at Cotonou (pers. obs.).

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*

Common resident and Palearctic migrant recorded throughout. Evidence of migration with a count of 20+ on 11 April 1998 and in the few days following, up from 1–6 birds on earlier counts, and down to two birds on 9 May 1998.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Abundant intra-African migrant in October–June. Large numbers roost on the walls and stony shores during the afternoon.

Green Heron *Butorides striatus*

Common year-round resident on all suitable waters. Probably breeds here^{2,11}.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Common resident and may breed in the area^{2,11}. Several present at all times on the dam.

Great Egret *Egretta alba*

Not uncommon resident and Palearctic visitor, especially in the south. One or two occurrences on the dam in February–March.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Not uncommon Palearctic migrant with some present year-round. Several occurrences in October–April.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Common Palearctic migrant with some year-round. Several birds present at all times on the dam in October–June.

White-faced Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna viduata*

Common breeding resident. The dam often has 100+ birds present. Many young birds present in December suggesting probable breeding in the area. Laying dates in Nigeria are July–October^{2,10}.

African Pygmy Goose *Nettapus auritus*

Probable breeding resident, which is uncommon to rare, throughout the country. Three males on the dam on 23 February 1998 remained until March¹³. This is a significant exploitation of a small area of suitable habitat^{2,11}.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

Not uncommon Palearctic migrant to the extreme north, particularly along the Niger River and in Park W^{12,17,20}. A pair at the dam on 20 February to at least 14 March 1998 were further south than previous records, although it has

been recorded to 06°38'N in Togo³. New record for this area and a significant exploitation of suitable habitat.

Vulturine Fish Eagle *Gypobierax angolensis*

Uncommon throughout. A pair at the dam in November 1997.

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*

Rare intra-African migrant or vagrant. An adult on 20 December 1998. No previously published records³, but there is a record from the north-east part of Pendjari Park in the late dry season of 1977, and records from Park W, near the Chutes de Koudou, in December 1977 (A. Green pers. comm.). It was also recorded by Szaniawski¹⁸ in the Bénin sector of Park W. Uncommon in Nigeria¹⁰ and considered a vagrant to both Ghana¹⁵ and Togo⁴.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Uncommon in this area. Widely recorded in the south. Single bird on the dam in December–March.

Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrio alleni*

Uncommon intra-African migrant. Some previous evidence of breeding⁴. Immature bird on 12 September 1997. May breed here.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Not uncommon resident throughout, breeding probable as attempted nesting has been observed. Several previous records³ but not listed by Dowsett & Forbes-Watson⁹. Six birds present on the dam on 23 February 1998, and a single on 9 May 1998. Probably breeds here.

African Jacana *Actophilornis africanus*

Common breeding resident throughout. Breeding previously recorded in the area and almost certainly breeds on the dam where up to 50 including juveniles present at all times⁴.

Lesser Jacana *Microparra capensis*

New Bénin record. Certainly the most significant record for the dam. The species is uncommon in Burkina Faso²¹, Niger¹⁶ and Nigeria⁹, and has not been recorded in either Ghana¹⁵ or Togo³, although it has been recorded in Ivory Coast¹⁹. It is reportedly local in Mali and Chad¹¹. It has, however, been recorded on the Mekrou River in Park W¹⁶.

At 18.20 hr on 7 May 1998 I observed what at first appeared to be a small *Tringa* walking on the lilies c70 m ahead of me. I quickly realised that this tiny bird was very probably *Microparra capensis* and I had excellent views of the bird through a telescope over the next 45 minutes and confirmed it as an adult of this species. It had a rich chestnut crown, a white supercilium and a chestnut brown eyestripe. The chestnut on the crown extended onto the nape and widened across the neck-sides. A rich golden-yellow wash was apparent on the neck and upper breast. Pure white underparts. Slightly greenish legs. Orange or

brownish bill. Its tiny size made confusion even with a juvenile *Actophilornis africanus* unlikely. I observed the bird again on the evening of 9 May with two companions and on several occasions thereafter until at least 17 May.

Greater Painted-Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*

Uncommon resident but probably overlooked because of its discreet behaviour and preference for often inaccessible habitat. Single female recorded on 17 May 1998. Several previous records from most areas of the country.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius biaticula*

Common Palearctic migrant in the south. Single bird on 15 April 1998 is the first inland record.

Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius*

New Bénin record. Rare intra-African migrant. An adult in breeding plumage at the dam on 8 April 1998, not seen on subsequent days. Several birds, including immatures, at Grand Popo on 19–21 November 1995, in an area of drying swamp in front of the Auberge at Grand Popo⁵, and at nearby Anecho in Togo on 14 January 1995. The species does not appear on Dowsett & Forbes-Watson's list⁹ and is rare in Togo⁵. Reported to occur only in coastal Bénin¹¹, although there are several records far inland in West Africa¹⁶.

Forbes' Plover *Charadrius forbesi*

New Bénin record. Uncommon to rare. Two birds observed on the dam on 4 April 1998. Two birds recorded on 17 January 1992 near a pool on the road from Ouidah to the Togo border. The species was not mentioned by Dowsett & Forbes-Watson⁹.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

New Bénin record. Uncommon Palearctic winter visitor or passage migrant principally in the south of the country⁵. Single recorded on the dam on 4 April 1998. Previously recorded on 21 January 1994 and 21 November 1995 at the south end of Lac Ahémé. Twenty-three birds recorded during the 1996 Waterfowl Census⁸. Not listed by Dowsett & Forbes-Watson⁹.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

Uncommon Palearctic migrant but perhaps overlooked. A record on 23 February 1998 was only the second for the area.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Common Palearctic migrant, widely recorded but only one previous record for this area. Single on 15 April 1998 when there were also several other migrating waders present suggesting that the dam may be an important site for spring migrants.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Not uncommon Palearctic migrant in October–April. Sev-

eral observations at a muddy end of the dam.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Common Palearctic migrant throughout the country. A few birds present during October–April, with 20 on 15 April 1998 and smaller numbers on following days indicating northward migration at that time.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Very common Palearctic migrant throughout the country. One or two birds present on the dam during October–May.

Four-banded Sandgrouse *Pterocles quadricinctus*

Probably not uncommon in the dry north¹³ and in this area during the dry season. Recorded in December and April.

Conclusions

This brief study is interesting for a number of reasons. The appearance of Little Grebe, African Pygmy Goose, Garganey and most particularly Lesser Jacana are all associated with the presence of *Nymphaea* which is to be expected on this type of still-water, and all are new to this area. Greater Painted Snipe, Kittlitz's Plover, Forbes' Plover and Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus* are all resident waders. Kittlitz's and Forbes' Plovers are relatively rare in this area and thus of interest here. Several more species will inevitably occur and the site will repay more constant observation. African Crake *Crex egregia* has, for example, already been recorded in the area³ and almost certainly occurs in the vicinity of the dam.

The dam supports a number of Palearctic migrants, particularly during spring migration in March–April, as indicated by the occurrence of Squacco Heron in some numbers, Purple Heron, Ringed Plover, Common Snipe, Greenshank, and Green, Wood, Common and Curlew Sandpipers. Little Stint *Calidris minutus* has already been recorded in the area and appears likely to be recorded at the dam in the future.

Several species probably breed at the dam or nearby, including Little Grebe, Long-tailed Cormorant, Darter, White-faced Whistling-Duck, Black Crake *Amaurornis flavirostris*, Allen's Gallinule, Common Moorhen and African Jacana.

Finally, Garganey and Ringed Plover are new to southern Borgou, and Little Grebe, Common Moorhen, Lesser Jacana, Kittlitz's Plover, Forbes' Plover and Curlew Sandpiper are new to the Bénin list⁸. ☞

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B. P. 302, Parakou, Bénin.

Appendix: List of 72 species observed within the perimeters of the dam.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*
 Long-tailed Cormorant *Phalacrocorax africanus*
 Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*
 Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*
 Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*
 Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*
 Green Heron *Butorides striatus*
 Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*
 Great Egret *Egretta alba*
 Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*
 Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*
 Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta*
 White-faced Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna viduata*
 African Pygmy Goose *Nettion auritus*
 Garganey *Anas querquedula*
 Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus*
 Vulturine Fish Eagle *Gypohierax angolensis*
 Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*
 Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*
 African Little Sparrowhawk *Accipiter minullus*
 Lizard Buzzard *Kaupifalco monogrammicus*
 Red-necked Buzzard *Buteo auguralis*
 Black Crake *Limnecorax flavivostra*
 Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrio alleni*
 Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*
 Denham's Bustard *Neotis denhami*
 African Jacana *Actophilornis africanus*
 Lesser Jacana *Microparra capensis*
 Greater Painted-Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*
 Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*
 Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius*
 Forbes' Plover *Charadrius forbesi*
 Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus*
 Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*
 Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*
 Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*
 Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*
 Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*
 Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*
 Four-banded Sandgrouse *Pterocles quadricinctus*
 African Green Pigeon *Treron calva*
 Black-billed Wood Dove *Turtur abyssinicus*
 Vinaceous Dove *Streptopelia vinacea*
 Violet Turaco *Musophaga violacea*
 Western Grey Plantain-eater *Crinifer piscator*
 African Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus*
 Little Swift *Apus affinis*
 Woodland Kingfisher *Halycon senegalensis*
 Striped Kingfisher *Halycon chelicuti*
 Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*
 Carmine Bee-eater *Merops nubicus*
 Abyssinian Roller *Coracias abyssinnica*
 African Grey Hornbill *Tockus nasutus*
 Singing Bush Lark *Mirafra cantillans*
 Sun Lark *Galerida modesta*
 Mosque Swallow *Hirundo senegala*
 House Martin *Delichon urbica*
 Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*
 Common Bulbul *Pynonotus barbatus*
 Green-backed Eremomela *Eremomela pusilla*
 Bleating Warbler *Camaroptera brachyura*
 White-shouldered Black Tit *Pitrus leucomelas*
 Scarlet-chested Sunbird *Nectarinia senegalensis*
 Long-tailed Shrike *Corvinella corvina*
 Fork-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis*
 Purple Glossy Starling *Lamprolornis purpureus*
 Northern Red Bishop *Euplectes franciscanus*
 Yellow-mantled Whydah *Euplectes macrourus*
 Red-cheeked Cordon-Bleu *Uraeginthus bengalus*
 Orange-cheeked Waxbill *Estrilda melpoda*
 Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura*
 Yellow-fronted Canary *Serinus mozambicus*

Birding Africa's basement— the Cape to the Kalahari

Keith Barnes

Part I—The Cape of Good Hope

Cape Town—arguably Africa's most beautiful city—is a phenomenal base from which to bird South Africa. Two weeks in the vicinity of the city could yield over 400 species, including 47 of the country's 58 endemics and near-endemics, and 126 of southern Africa's 180 endemics, making it an indispensable destination for anyone interested in the continent's birds. This article outlines the best birding spots and routes, specifically targeting endemics, both South and southern African. The amount of time required to bird each route is suggested and the birding, scenery and general tourism features are all rated. Prices in Rand (R) are quoted. At the time of writing (April 1999) US\$ 1 = R 6.3, with the Rand falling constantly.

Getting around

Birding around Cape Town by public transport is possible, but exceptionally difficult. The majority of the sites listed here are not accessible using public transport and one would have to take general or specialist tours to get there. If you want to "DIY", the best option is car hire: the major agents at the airport are Budget (27-21-9340216), Avis (27-21-934-0808/88) and Hertz (27-21-386-1560), but some smaller operators with cheaper options include Cape Car Hire (27-21-683-2441), Safari rentals (4x4s & minibuses, permitted into neighbouring states 27-21-644-895) and Affordable Car Hire (27-21-439-1899). For more information on guided tours in the western Cape see Sugarbird's Home Page at <http://home.mweb.co.za/kb/kbarnes>.

Accommodation

Accommodation (and price and quality) options vary dramatically in Cape Town; for a full review check out Sugarbirds' Home Page; in particular, two excellent and very affordable guest houses exist on the peninsula that cater principally for birders. Windy Ridge (Tel/Fax: 27-21-786-1414; E-mail: cardwell@iafrica.com) in Simonstown and Afton Grove (Tel: 785-2992; Fax: 785-3456; E-mail: afton@iafrica.com; <http://www.afton.co.za>) in Noordhoek are both superb, run by birders and come highly recommended.

Cape Peninsula (1–2 days)—The Cape of Storms!

• Birds: 7/10 • Scenery 10/10 • General tourism value: 10/10
Forced from the ocean bed by incomprehensible tectonic forces, a spectacular 1 km high and 70 km

long mass of sandstone juts out into one of the most hostile oceans in the world, the southern Atlantic—this is the Cape Peninsula. This route should take one day, although it has been broken up into various subsections should one choose to proceed at a more leisurely pace.

Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens

The best place to begin is the world-renowned Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens on the hind ridge of Table Mountain. Ideally situated close to town, one will be rewarded by spending as little as one hour in the gardens. To get there from town, take Eastern Boulevard (M3) and proceed along Union Avenue. At the Rhodes Drive intersection, c 2 km beyond the red-roofed university, turn right. The gardens are a further 2 km along Rhodes Drive and are well signposted. Several fynbos specialities can be seen with remarkable ease in the cultivated erica and protea gardens (ask for a map at the entrance point) including the skulking **Grassbird** *Sphenoeacus afer*, energetic **Orange-breasted Sunbird** *Nectarinia violacea* and flamboyant **Cape Sugarbird** *Promerops cafer*. Other specialities include **Cape Siskin** *Serinus totta*, **Cape Bulbul** *Pycnonotus capensis* and the remarkably tame **Cape Francolin** *Francolinus capensis*. Also common in the gardens are other South African endemics such as **Lesser Double-collared Sunbird** *Nectarinia chalybea*, **Karoo Prinia** *Prinia maculosa*, **Southern Boubou** *Laniarius ferrugineus*, **Cape White-eye** *Zosterops pallidus*, **Cape Sparrow** *Passer melanurus* and **Grey-backed Cisticola** *Cisticola subruficapillus*. Keep your eyes peeled skywards for **Mountain (Forest) Buzzard** *Buteo oreophilus*, which is regularly seen along with the more common (and potentially confusing) **Steppe Buzzard** *Buteo buteo vulpinus*. The tall avenue of oak trees near the garden's entrance, behind the conservatory, has regularly held a breeding pair of **Spotted Eagle Owl** *Bubo africanus*.

The Afro-montane forest patches, particularly in Skelton gorge, support **Forest Canary** *Serinus scotops*, **African Dusky Alseonak** *Muscicapa adusta*, **African Paradise Flycatcher** *Terpsiphone viridis*, **Cape Batis** *Batis capensis*, **Cinnamon Dove** *Columba larvata*, **Rameron Pigeon** *C. arquatrix* and the noisy **Sombre Greenbul** *Andropadus importunus*. The



Grassbird, *Spbenoeacus afer* by Ian Lewington

main attraction is **Knysna Warbler** *Bradypterus sylvaticus*, a species more usually heard than seen. Chances are best in September–November when it is most vociferous and responsive, at the top of the gorge where the vegetation is sparser.

Farther up-slope, the gardens revert to natural fynbos vegetation and rocky outcrops, where **Cape Siskin**, **Ground Woodpecker** *Geocolaptes olivaceus*, **Familiar Chat** *Cercomela familiaris*, **Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*, **Cape Rock Thrush** *Monticola rupestris* and **White-necked Raven** *Corvus albicollis* are common, and overhead watch for **Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus*, **Alpine Apus** *melba*, **Black A.** *barbatus* and **Little Swifts** *A. affinis*. Similar species can be found by taking the cable car to the top of the mountain, which holds more species of flowering plant than the British Isles.

Wildevölvlei and Kommetjie

From Kirstenbosch, head south in the direction of Hout Bay along the M63—which turns into the spectacular Chapmans Peak drive after passing through Hout Bay. As this descends into Noordhoek, keep going straight until you reach Sun Valley; turn right at the T-junction; soon you reach an intersection—turn right onto the M65 (Kommetjie Road). After c4 km you reach an industrial park, with a large wetland on your right—this is Wildevölvlei. For access to the marsh, turn into the housing development at Imhoff's Gift, and park in Rameron Avenue.

Some excellent and unusual birds are regularly seen here, including **White-backed Duck** *Thalassornis leuconotus*, **Maccoa Duck** *Oxyura maccoa*, **Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybridus*, **Black-necked Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis*, **African Marsh Harrier** *Circus ranivorus* and **Black-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax*. A host of more common waterfowl also occurs. At the time of writing this wetland was suffering eutrophication problems and it would be wise to obtain more information about its status before planning a visit.

Leaving Wildevölvlei, continue south-west along Kommetjie Road. Once in Kommetjie, take the turn

to the right immediately beyond the Kommetjie Hotel. This is the last turn before the road ascends to a scenic coastal drive toward Scarborough. This road skirts the hotel parking area and continues past a large tidal pool to the wind-buffed Kommetjie promontory—park here. Scan the rocks and tidal pool for Benguela-endemics such as **Hartlaub's Gull** *Larus hartlaubii*, **Bank Phalacrocorax** *neglectus*, **Crowned P.** *coronatus* and **Cape Cormorants** *P. capensis*, **African Black Oystercatcher** *Haematopus moquini*, and other species such as **White-fronted Plover** *Charadrius marginatus* and **Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*. In winter, the sea should be scanned for pelagic species that occasionally venture inshore. **White-chinned Petrel** *Procellaria aequinoctialis*, **Sooty Shearwater** *Puffinus griseus*, **Cape Gannet** *Sula capensis* (all year) and **South Polar Skua** *Catharacta maccormicki* are regularly seen and it would not be surprising to see a **Shy Diomedea** *cauta* or **Black-browed Albatross** *D. melanophris* effortlessly dipping below the horizon. Winter also brings **Antarctic Tern** *Sterna vittata* to the roost that regularly gathers in the tidal pool. Sift through the **Swift** *S. bergii* and **Sandwich Terns** *S. sandwicensis*, and in summer **Arctic S.** *paradisaea* and **Common Terns** *S. hirundo*, in search of something rare. Check the tide tables as more birds roost at low tide; weekends should also be avoided as fishermen and boat launching disturbs the roost. If, at first, you do not see all the species you are seeking, take a walk north along the beach as birds roost there also. An early morning walk here may reward the vigilant observer with a **Cape Clawless Otter** *Aonyx capensis capensis*.

Cape Point Nature Reserve

Continue south along the M65, past Misty Cliffs and Scarborough, to the Cape Point Nature Reserve. Forming the southern portion of the peninsula, this reserve can also be reached from Muizenberg and Simon's Town via the M4. You can enjoy the reserve's sensational and idyllic scenery while looking for additional fynbos specialities, including the numerous **Orange-breasted Sunbird** and **Cape Sugarbird**, as well as seabirds from the south-westernmost point in Africa. Don't miss the opportunity to scan for albatrosses and the occasional **Peregrine Falcon** at the Cape Point lighthouse. The viewing sites at the point also hold **Cape Siskin**. Other species include **Cape Bulbul**, **Speckled Mousebird** *Colius striatus*, **Fiscal Flycatcher** *Melaenornis silens*, **Bokmakierie** *Malaconotus zeylonus*, **Southern Boubou**, **Neddicky** *Cisticola fulvicapillus* and **Karoo Prinia**. The reserve has attracted many rarities, including a **Red-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon rubricauda* that

established itself on the cliffs. The plains toward Sirkelsvlei support **Black-rumped Button-Quail** *Turnix hottentotta* and **Cloud Cisticola** *Cisticola textrix*. **Malachite Sunbird** *Nectarinia famosa* can be found in certain *Leonotis* patches and the ubiquitous **Red-winged Starling** *Onychognathus morio* is ever-present.

The reserve is also home to the strange **Bontebok** *Damaliscus dorcas* and elegant **Eland** *Taurotragus oryx*. Beware of the **Chacma Baboons** *Papio ursinus*—they have become decidedly cheeky within the reserve—and please don't feed them. A minimum entry fee of R 20 (or R 10 per person whichever is more) is charged.

Boulders Bay

Leaving the reserve, return to Cape Town along the False Bay coastline, via the M4. As you enter suburban Simonstown, look for a golf course on the right (coastal) side. At the northern perimeter of the golf course turn right onto Bellevue Road. Start looking for penguins immediately. The colony is expanding, and birds have been recorded attempting to incubate golf balls! This idyllic spot consists of white beaches, protected by large granite boulders, and permanently inhabited by the little black-and-white suited **Jackass Penguin** *Spheniscus demersus*. A must-see venue, the birds can be approached extremely closely. **African Black Oystercatcher** and **Cape** and **Crowned Cormorants** are regularly seen on the rocks. The strandveld vegetation holds **White-backed Mousebird** *Colius colius*, **Lesser Double-collared Sunbird** and occasionally **Cape Sugarbird**.

Strandfontein Sewage Works

To visit this site one requires a waiver issued by the Cape Bird Club (Tel: 27-21-686-8795) on behalf of the Cape Metropolitan Council. Please ensure you have one before visiting. From Simonstown head north along the coastal road. Beyond Clovelly, do not take Boyes Drive, which heads up the mountainside, but continue along the coastal road to Muizenberg. From there take Baden Powell Drive (R 310) and turn into Strandfontein Road (M17) c 7 km from the circle. After 4 km turn left to Zeekoevlei and the sewage works are on the northern shore of False Bay. One of the best wetland sites in South Africa, it holds up to 94 species of waterbird, 45 breeding species, including the endemic **South African Shelduck** *Tadorna cana* and **Cape Shoveler** *Anas smithii* and (in summer) many waders and terns.

Pelagic magic—sensational seabird frenzy (1 day)

• Birds: 10/10 • Scenery: 6/10 • General tourism value: 4/10
Ever grimaced while ticking an albatross from land,

when your field guide offers more detail than the speck you saw dipping under the horizon? In South Africa, a series of pelagic options exist so that you may scoff in delight as these majestic oceanic wanderers approach too close for you to focus. Many seabird specialists, unsurprisingly, regard the Western Cape as one of the best pelagic birding spots in the world, regularly supporting hundreds of thousands of seabirds. Seabird abundance is particularly high due to the highly productive, nutrient-rich upwelling Benguela current, derived from Antarctica's icy waters. Very few places provide such world-class harbours and ships, a plethora of exciting species and the spectacle of 1,000s of seabirds squabbling over scraps behind fishing boats.

Sailing from Simonstown or Hout Bay, operating trawlers are targeted specifically. As many as 5,000 seabirds, of 15–20 different species, could be awaiting your arrival. Approaching an operating trawler sets one amidst one of the largest seabird feeding frenzies on the globe. Once the initial adrenaline rush is under control, and you have fought off the crippling views of **Black-browed**, **Shy** or **Yellow-nosed Albatrosses** *Diomedea chlororhynchos*, **White-chinned Petrel**, **Cape Gannet**, **Sooty Shearwater** and **Wilson's Storm-Petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus*, you can begin to sift through the clouds of birds in search of less common species. The composition of the flocks, and your chances of seeing various species, varies according to season.

In winter (May–August), one has the best chance of finding **Wandering Albatross** *Diomedea exulans*, **Northern Macronektes halli** and **Southern Giant Petrels** *M. giganteus*, **Pintado Petrel** *Daption capense*, **Broad-billed Pachyptila vittata**, **Antarctic P. desolata** and **Salvin's Prions** *P. (v.) salvini*, **South Polar Skua** and rarely **Southern Fulmar** *Fulmarus glacialis*. Spring (September–October) brings passage migrants such as **Soft-plumaged Petrel** *Pterodroma mollis* and **Great Shearwater** *Puffinus gravis*. In summer (November–February), the Benguela attracts Palearctic migrants including **Cory's Shearwater** *Calonectris diomedea*, **Manx Shearwater** *Puffinus puffinus*, **British Storm-Petrel** *Hydrobates pelagicus*, **Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus* and **Sabine's Gull** *Larus sabini*. Other summer visitors include **Flesh-footed Shearwater** *Puffinus carneipes*, **Great-winged Petrel** *Pterodroma macroptera* (a winter breeder on the Prince Edward Islands), **Great Shearwater** (which breeds on the Tristan group) and **Leach's Storm-Petrel** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* (which breeds on South Africa's coastal islands). Autumn (March–April) brings the best chance of seeing **Black-bellied Storm-Petrel** *Fregetta tropica* as it heads for warmer tropical

climes.

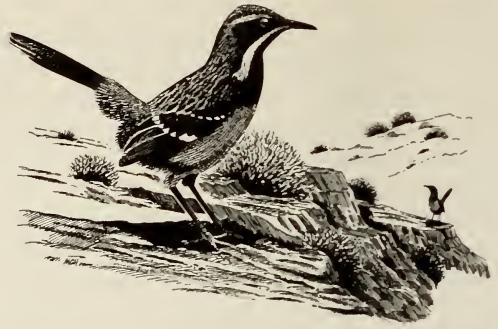
The Western Cape is known for its variety of vagrant pelagic species. Although unlikely, the following are some of the more spectacular species that are possible: **Royal** *Diomedea epomophora*, **Grey-headed** *D. chrysostoma* and (**Dark-mantled Sooty**) **Albatrosses** *Phoebastria fusca*, **Little Shearwater** *Puffinus assimilis*, and one of the best chances in the world of seeing the extremely rare and endangered **Spectacled Petrel** *Procellaria (aequinoctialis) conspicillata* (which breeds on the Tristan Group). Check the Sugarbird Home page for latest options on pelagic trips in the Western Cape. It is advisable to bring seasickness medicine as the waters can turn rough suddenly.

Sir Lowry's Pass and Betty's Bay (1 day)—Traversing False Bay

• Birds: 9/10 • Scenery: 8/10 • General tourism value: 6/10

The nearest place to Cape Town holding a full complement of the fynbos specials, Sir Lowry's Pass in the Hottentots Holland Mountains is not to be missed. To get there follow the N2 from Cape Town to Somerset West and begin ascending the pass. At the summit, a parking lot will appear suddenly on the right-hand side of the road. Cross to the side of the road opposite the parking lot. Beyond the ditch, clamber through the broken fence which is a disused entrance. A wide path, formerly an access road, climbs to the left. Walk north-east, along the upper of the two tracks that lead from a cleared area adjacent to the road. After c1 km there is excellent fynbos habitat. If the ericas are flowering, **Orange-breasted Sunbird** will be active. Look for protea trees with large yellow pincushion flowers—these mixed *Leucospermum conocarpodendron* and *Protea neriifolia* stands are regularly visited by the magnificent **Cape Sugarbird**. A high-pitched monotonous zitting should give away **Neddicky** and in wetter vegetation the **Grassbird**'s descending warble (easily confused with that of Victorin's Warbler) is usually evident.

After c1.5 km, a sedge-seep filled with long reed-like *Elegia capensis* and *Berzelia* is evident where the power cables cross the path. The sedge beds hold several pairs of **Victorin's Warbler** *Bradypterus victorini*—a secretive bird likely only to be glimpsed, as it keeps low in the undergrowth. It is particularly difficult to see in strong winds. Just beyond the sedge, a small and obscure path leads to the left. After 150 m it leads to a shallow gully, where at least two parties of the effervescent **Cape Rockjumper** *Chaetops frenatus* are regularly seen. Clamber onto the rocks on the west side, and if, at first, no success is had, head back to the parking lot along the top of the ridge—a party is bound to be seen or heard—



Cape Rockjumpers *Chaetops frenatus* by Mike Hodgson (courtesy of BirdQuest)

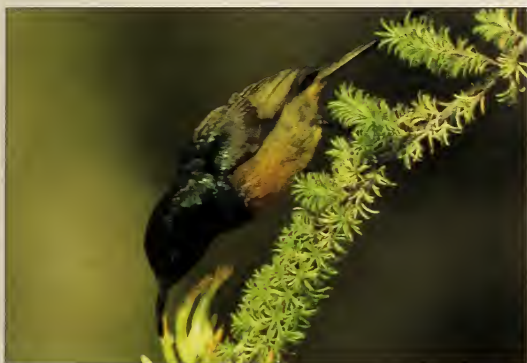
listen for the crescendo of their piping whistles! Other species here include **Ground Woodpecker**, **Cape Rock Thrush**, **Cape Siskin**, **Black Eagle** *Aquila verreauxii*, **Jackal Buzzard** *Buteo rufofuscus*, **Grey-backed Cisticola**, **Cape Bunting** *Emberiza capensis*, **Peregrine Falcon**, **White-necked Raven**, **Familiar Chat**, and rarely **Sentinel Rock Thrush** *Monticola explorator* and **Cape Eagle Owl** *Bubo capensis*.

From the ridge-top, looking toward Steenbras Dam, one can see a railway-line; the scarce **Striped Flufftail** *Sarothura affinis* has been seen below it. Although this bird can be almost impossible to see, it seems to show itself more frequently to foreign visitors! The pine plantations east of the canons and around Steenbras Dam hold breeding **Black Accipiter melanoleucus** and **Red-breasted Sparrowhawks** *A. rufiventris* and **Forest Buzzard**.

The West Coast (1–2 days)—a taste of Namaqualand

• Birds: 8/10 • Scenery: 7/10 • General tourism value: 6/10
Located c120 km north of Cape Town, in southern Namaqualand, this area's arid and rather bleak terrain is broken by some of South Africa's most impressive wetlands, particularly Langebaan Lagoon and the Berg River Estuary. In the austral summer, the Berg River holds the greatest densities of shorebirds on the entire eastern Atlantic flyway. Head out of Cape Town on the R27 via Milnerton. Approximately 90 km from Cape Town, the left turn to West Coast National Park (within which Langebaan Lagoon is enclosed) will be seen. If choosing to continue to the Berg River mouth, proceed along the R27 to Laaiplek, where you cross the river mouth just before entering town.

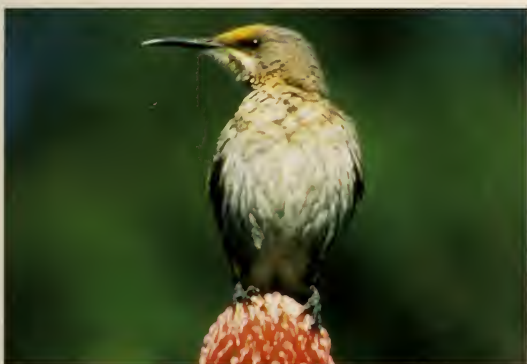
At Langebaan Lagoon, Palearctic waders abound in summer, particularly **Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea*, **Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*, **Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*, **Red Knot** *Calidris canutus* and **Sanderling** *C. alba*. Extremely healthy numbers of resident shorebirds including **African**



1. Orange-breasted Sunbird *Nectarinia violacea* feeding on erica nectar (Percy FitzPatrick Institute)



3. Southern Boubou *Laniarius ferrugineus* (Sugarbird Images)



2. Cape Sugarbird *Promerops cafer* (Sugarbird Images)



4. Spectacled Petrel *Procellaria (aequinocialis) conspicillata* (Sugarbird Images)

Black Oystercatcher, **White-fronted Plover**, **Kittlitz's Plover** *Charadrius pecuarius* and the scarce **Chestnut-banded Plover** *C. pallidus* supplement these. The marshes and sedge beds hold **African Marsh Harrier** as well as skulking palustrine specialists, including **Red-chested Flufftail** *Sarothura rufa* and **Kaffir Rail** *Rallus caerulescens*. The best hides are at Geelbek, where a walking trail to a series of salt pans also exists. Visit at low tide when the mudflats are exposed.

The vegetation and open cultivated fields surrounding the wetlands support an interesting avifauna, including conspicuous species not always easily seen elsewhere. The most absorbing among these are the striking **Black Harrier** *Circus maurus*, strident **Southern Black Korhaan** *Eupodotis afra afra*, **Capped Wheatear** *Oenanthe pileata*, **Thick-billed Galerida** *magnirostris* and **Red-capped Larks** *Calandrella cinerea*. Other common species include **Pied Spree** *bicolor* and **Wattled Starlings** *Creatophora cinerea*, **Bokmakierie**, **Karoo Scrub-Robin** *Cercotrichas coryphaeus*, **Yellow Canary** *Serinus flaviventris* and **White-backed Mousebird**.

If additional time is available, head to Bird Island in

Lambert's Bay, one of only six islands in the world where **Cape Gannet** breeds. Here you will be able to watch their crazy antics at point blank range. It is an amazing spectacle that enthalls not only birders—particularly now that a new high-tech hide offers face-to-face encounters with the birds. The island also holds **Jackass Penguin**, **Bank**, **Crowned** and **Cape Cormorants**.

Part II—the Garden Route

Probably the most under-rated birding area in South Africa, the area between Cape Town and Tsitsikamma National Park, and the virtually unbirded Outeniqua and Swarberg ranges inland, offer splendid scenery and a higher concentration of South African endemics than any other area in the country.

Overberg and De Hoop (1–2 days)

• Birds: 8/10 • Scenery: 7/10 • General tourism value: 6/10

If heading to the garden route from Cape Town, an excellent area to explore for a day is the Overberg and De Hoop Nature Reserve. Follow the N2 from Cape Town, via Sir Lowry's Pass (see part I) to Caledon; turn onto the R316 and continue to Bredasdorp (c74 km). The R316 between Caledon

and Bredasdorp is prime Overberg country, nestled on the coastal plain, and sheltered by the rugged Langeberg Mountains to the north, the Overberg stretches to Cape Agulhas—the southernmost point in Africa. Once a series of plains of lowland fynbos, the majority of the original vegetation has been replaced by wheat. It is not all bad news however, as many interesting birds, particularly some rare ones, have adapted remarkably well. Parties of stately **Blue Crane** *Anthropoides paradisaea* stride through the area. Although once rare here, more than 30% of the global population now congregates in this area annually. The fields are also home to **Denham's Bustard** *Neotis denbami*, **Thick-billed Lark**, **Red-capped Lark** and the highly range-restricted **Agulhas Long-billed Lark** *Certhilauda (curvirostris) brevirostris*. Occasionally **Secretary Birds** *Sagittarius serpentarius* can be seen pulverising hapless snakes near the road. These species are possible anywhere along this road, and numerous stops to look and listen are advised. Stop also in the small patches of remaining renosterbos (Rhino-bush) and strandveld to look for the stunning **Southern Black Korhaan**.

From Bredasdorp, take the Swellendam road (R319). After 7 km turn right to Wydgelee, 29 km further turn right to De Hoop and continue 10 km to the gate. De Hoop, in stark contrast to the wheatbelt, comprises a unique diversity of natural habitats. These include rugged coastline, pristine beaches and sand dunes, a wide coastal plain holding remnant fragments of the highly threatened lowland fynbos and some bizarre and unique limestone hills incised by the 15 km-long De Hoop Vlei. The Ramsar-designated vlei is actually a coastal lake, often excellent for waterbirds; **Cape Shoveler** is one of 75 species of waterfowl regularly recorded here. The Milkwoods surrounding the vlei support **Southern Tchagra** *Tchagra tchagra*. An isolated sandstone

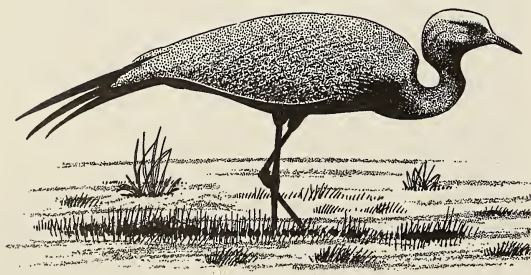
inselberg, called Potberg, rises abruptly in the east of the reserve, surrounded by a sea of wind-derived aeolian sand. This small inselberg is the only home for several plant species, including two spectacular *Proteas*. It also holds the last **Cape Vulture** *Gyps coprotheres* colony (c30 pairs) in the Western Cape as well as small but significant populations of **Striped Flufftail** and **Black-rumped Button-Quail**. Other special species among the list of 260 recorded at the reserve are **Pied Starling**, **Orange-throated (Cape) Longclaw** *Macronyx capensis*, **Bokmakierie**, **Pearl-breasted Swallow** *Hirundo dimidiata*, **Pied Barbet** *Tricholaema leucomelas*, **Black Harrier**, **African Black Oystercatcher** and eight species of canary *Serinus* spp. **Cape Francolin** is extremely tame, particularly at the campsite where they will forage less than a metre away, while **Fiery-necked Nightjar** *Caprimulgus pectoralis* is common around the cottages at night, belting out its crescendo call.

The Garden Route (3–4 days)

• Birds: 8/10 • Scenery: 10/10 • General tourism value: 6/10

Located c450 km east of Cape Town, this picturesque and dainty mosaic of fynbos and forest gardens is scattered among a plethora of lakes, lagoons and seashores. Knysna is the closest area to Cape Town holding large tracts of Cape temperate forest and it makes a wonderful base to explore this striking area. Several accommodation options are available in Knysna, check the Sugarbird Home page <http://home.mweb.co.za/kb/kbarnes> for a full listing. The most notable option is the Bush Camp in Phantom Forest Eco-reserve (Tel: 27-44-386-0046; Fax: 27-44-387-1944; e-mail: phantomforest@mweb.co.za). This luxurious camp is located within the forest on Phantom Pass and its fast-growing reputation as one of South Africa's finest eco-tourism destinations is not unfounded. All the endemic forest specials have been found on the property as has **Narina Trogon** *Apaloderma narina* and other 'most wanted' birds. Canopy towers are currently under construction, exclusively for the use of paying lodge-birders. To reach the reserve, take the first turn to the left on entering Knysna (from Cape Town), before you cross the bridge. Do not peel round under the bridge, but head straight along the shore of the lagoon on Phantom Pass Road for c1 km. Follow the signs to Phantom Forest Eco-reserve.

Many other forest patches exist; particularly good are those at Diepwalle and Big Tree. Further along the N2 (c80 km), the small town of Nature's Valley has many cheap B&Bs and is surrounded by excellent forest. A particularly quaint spot here is called Tourist Lodge (Tel: 27-04457-6681).



Blue Crane *Anthropoides paradisaea* by Mike Hodgson
(courtesy of BirdQuest)

Spend most time in the tall cathedral-type forests. Sometimes deathly silent, the twittering of a bird party can break the lethargy of the forest. Mixed-species flocks comprising **Bar-throated Apalis** *Apalithoracica*, **Blue-mantled Flycatcher** *Trochocercus cyanomelas*, **Grey Cuckoo-Shrike** *Coracina caesia* and **Yellow-throated Warbler** *Phylloscopus ruficapilla* sally and glean insects from the canopy of buttressed Yellowwood and Ironwood trees. Be on the lookout for **Knysna Woodpecker** *Campethera notata*, which frequently utters its characteristic staccato scream. The cool mossy rocks, fungus-flecked ground and fern glades are home to parties of chuckling **Terrestrial Brownbul** *Phyllastrephus terrestris* as well as **White-starred Robin** *Pogonocichla stellata* and **Chorister Robin-Chat** *Cossypha dichroa*. Track any raucous croaking which may herald a **Knysna Turaco** *Tauraco (persa) corythaix*. Look for fruiting trees as they may hold flocks of **Black-bellied Glossy Starling** *Lamprolornis corruscus*. Low hooting, particularly in spring (September–November), may bring, with luck, a view of the fabled **Narina Trogon**. Keep scanning overhead for breeding **Mountain Buzzard** which regularly issue a plaintive *kleeur* call. The constant churring of the **Cape Batis** will give this pokey insectivore away, but the cryptic **Olive Bush-Shrike** *Malaconotus olivaceus* is more difficult to see, although it does respond to whistled imitations of its call. On the forest floor, several skulkers—the noisy **Red-necked Spurfowl** *Francolinus afer* and **Cinnamon** and **Tambourine Doves** *Turtur tympanistria*—are more frequently heard than seen. In summer, the piercing *pretty georgie* whistle of arguably Africa's most dazzling cuckoo, the **African Emerald Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx cupreus*, is blasted from treetops almost as lush as the bird itself. Also common are **African Goshawk** *Accipiter tachiro*, **Olive Woodpecker** *Dendropicus griseocephalus*, **Black Saw-wing** *Psalidoprocne pristoptera*, **Sombre Bulbul**, **Fork-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus adsimilis*, **Bleating Bush Warbler** *Camaroptera brachyura*, **Southern Boubou**, **Dusky Flycatcher**, **Eastern Black-headed Oriole** *Oriolus larvatus* and **African Paradise Flycatcher**. At night, the bubbling call of the **Wood Owl** *Strix woodfordii* is not uncommon and keep an ear open for the phantom-like foghorn hooting of the diminutive **Buff-spotted Flufftail** *Sarothura elegans*, one of Africa's hardest forest birds to see.

The forest edge also has its specialists, including the bracken-dependent **Knysna Warbler**, a very difficult bird to see, even when it is calling in September–October. The Knysna Heads hold a sig-

nificant population of these. Far easier to find is the seed-eating endemic **Forest Canary**, **Swee Waxbill** *Estrilda melanotis* and **Greater Double Collared Nectarinia** *afra* and **Black Sunbirds** *N. amethystina*. The rolling hills expose chunks of fynbos on their crests. When in flower, the red ericas are adorned with **Orange-breasted Sunbirds**. **Cape Sugarbird**, vociferous **Victorin's Warbler** and other fynbos specialities are also easily seen here.

Also visit Tsitsikamma National Park where **South-ern Right Whales** *Eubalaena australis* come inshore to breed and calve. In the park there is excellent forest, holding many of the species listed above. The Groot River is known to hold several river-dependent species more typical of tropical rivers including **Half-collared Kingfisher** *Alcedo semitorquata* and the elusive **African Finfoot** *Podica senegalensis* and **White-backed Night Heron** *Gorsachius leuconotus*. Within the park, the Storms River Mouth restcamp, with its excellent cottages and facilities, is recommended—contact South African National Parks (Tel: 27-12-343-1991; Fax: 27-12-343-0905; e-mail: reservations@parks-sa.co.za) for details.

Swartberg Pass (1–2 days add-on to 7 or 8)

• Birds: 9/10 • Scenery: 10/10 • General tourism value: 7/10

This route is only possible if combined with a trip to the Garden Route or Karoo National Park, or preferably both, as it links these two dramatically different destinations. Nowhere is the striking variability of South Africa more evident than on the short drive between Knysna and Prince Albert, taking in the Outeniqua and Swartberg mountains. Temperate evergreen forests cloak the shady southern mountain slopes, well-watered by coastal mists and year-round rainfall, while succulent desert plants cling to the blistered northern valley floors, sweltering in the rain-shadow of the mountains. From Knysna, one should head back on the N2 towards George. Leaving the N2 at the George turn-off, head along the N9 over the Outeniqua Pass and then take the N12 to Oudtshoorn. The many lay-byes are worth a stop, scan for fynbos specials and **Black** and **Martial Eagles** *Polemaetus bellicosus*, which are seen here regularly. Once over the pass, the vegetation will begin to look decidedly scrubby—you are now in the Little Karoo. On reaching Oudtshoorn, keep heading straight—the N12 branches to the right—along the R328 to Prince Albert, following signs to Congo Caves. Take the Schoemanspoort Pass and follow all signs to Prince Albert/Swartberg Pass—bypassing the turn-off to the Congo Caves. The road turns to dirt shortly thereafter. As one ascends the pass, the scrub turns to fynbos, with the associated gamut of com-



5. Namaqua Sandgrouse *Pterocles namaqua* (Sugarbird Images)



7. Red-capped Lark *Calandrella cinerea*, easily identified by the rufous shoulder patch and crown (Sugarbird Images)



6. Slater's Lark *Spizocorys sclateri* is best identified by its heavy bill and tear-drop line below the eye (Sugarbird Images)



8. Barlow's Lark *Certhilauda barlowi* is now considered a distinct species from the closely related Karoo Lark *C. albescentis*, on the basis of its heavier breast streaking and notable differences in genetic composition and song structure (Sugarbird Images)

mon fynbos birds. Higher up, the bushes become smaller and the proportion of exposed rock increases. Pause at the top, called Die Top: on either side of the road a group of **Cape Rockjumpers** can be found. The grating *keaurghgh* of **Ground Woodpecker** is not uncommon here. **Cape** and **Sentinel Rock Thrushes** can also be seen. Two to three kilometres further, the road to Die Hel branches off left. This junction is excellent for **Cape Siskin**. A little farther, a large stand of *Protea* trees hosts **Cape Sugarbird**, **Orange-breasted Sunbird**, **Grassbird** and on occasion, the scarce **Protea Canary** *Serinus leucopterus*. Descending to Prince Albert, soaring cliffs with spectacular rock formations line the 20-km gravel road. At high altitude, search for soaring **Black, Booted** *Hieraaetus pennatus* and **Martial Eagles**. As you enter the drier gorge the avifauna changes rapidly—keep your eyes peeled for **Pale-winged Starling** *Onychognathus nabouroup* and **Mountain Chat** *Oenanthe monticola* on the cliffs, and **Malachite Sunbird** on the aloes. Just before exiting the canyon, the river supports some luxurious *Acacia karoo* scrub; stop here for **Fairy Flycatcher**

Stenostira scita, **White-throated Canary** *Serinus albogularis*, **White-backed Mousebird**, **Layard's Tit-Babbler** *Parisoma layardi*, **Long-billed Crombec** *Sylvietta rufescens* and **Karoo Scrub-Robin**. The canyon ends abruptly, and c4 km beyond, a small picnic/camping spot is located on the left, just before the Klaarstroom road intersection. Pause here, as **Namaqua Warbler** *Phragmacia substriata* and **Pirit Batis** *Batis pririt* are common in the grove of trees.

Whether heading back to Cape Town, or on to Karoo National Park, it is possible (and advisable) to overnight in Prince Albert, as the karoo vegetation is most productive at dawn. The Hotel Swartberg (top-range), Rozie's (mid-range) and Huis Adriaan or Hooggenoeg Holiday Houses (budget) are recommended. Call the Prince Albert Tourism Bureau for bookings and more information (Tel: 27-23-5411-366). The small series of hills east of town hold a few parties of **Karoo Eremomela** *Eremomela gregalis*. The plains north of Prince Albert are best in the early morning. Although the R353 is productive (bird the Gamka riverbed where it crosses the road c8 km before the N1), if you have time available, take the

dirt road to Seekoegat (the only road heading right on leaving Prince Albert), 1 km north of town. Stop and bird extensively in the (usually dry) Oukloof riverbed. If any water is lying, look for the nomadic **Black-headed Canary** *Serinus alario*. While driving across the plains, keep a lookout for the low-density **Ludwig's Bustard** *Neotis ludwigii* and **Karoo Korhaan** *Eupodotis vigorsii*. Stop occasionally to look and listen for **Rufous-eared Warbler**, *Malcoris pectoralis* and a host of **larks** in this area (many species are similar to those at Karoo National Park described below). Proceed to Karoo National Park, on the N1, South Africa's premier highway; the entrance is 5 km south-west of Beaufort West.

Karoo National Park (2–3 days)

• Birds: 8/10 • Scenery: 7/10 • General tourism value: 6/10

The Khoisan hunter-gatherers, the oldest inhabitants of South Africa, called the central plateau the 'Karu', or 'place of great dryness'. Chalets, cottages and camping are available in the National Park—and there is an air-conditioned restaurant (to book tel: 27-201-5-2828/9 or fax: 27-201-5-1671). Underlying its barren appearance, the Karoo biome is home to some 5,000 species of plant—more than are in Canada. It holds one third of all the world's succulent plant species. The park represents one of the more spectacular parts of the Karoo, with the impressive Nuweveld escarpment, which rises to 1,900 m, forming the backdrop for the lower plains. Despite only 170 bird species having been recorded in the park, it is extremely important for Namib-Karoo biome-restricted species, as well as supporting a host of other arid-zone specialities. The lowland plains have **Ludwig's Bustard**, **Karoo Korhaan**, **Spike-heeled Lark** *Chersomanes albofasciata*, **Karoo Lark** *Certhilauda albescens*, **Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark** *Eremopterix verticalis*, **Tractrac Chat** *Cercomela tractrac*, **Karoo Chat** *C. schlegelii*, **Karoo Eremomela** and **Rufous-eared Warbler**. **Black-headed Canary** occurs whenever there is seeding grass and water. The belts of riverine *Acacia karoo* woodland hold **Namaqua Warbler** and provide food, shelter and breeding habitat for many other species. The thicket and scrub on the slopes support **Layard's Tit-Babbler** and **Southern Grey Tit** *Parus afer*. In very wet years, nomadic **Black-eared Sparrow-Lark** *Eremopterix australis* and **Lark-like Bunting** *Emberiza impetuanii* arrive to breed in large numbers, and are then absent until the next heavy rains, which may be up to decades apart. In exceptional rain years, **Sclater's Lark** *Spizocorys sclateri* has also been recorded. The secretive and localised **Cinnamon-breasted Warbler** *Euryptila subcinnamomea*, **African Rock Pipit**

Anthus crenatus, **Pale-winged Starling** and **Ground Woodpecker** occur in rocky gorges and kloofs while **Sickle-winged Chat** *Cercomela sinuata* is found in plateau scrub. The best area to find these species is Klipspringer Pass. At the top of the plateau, there are several stopping points to peer into a gorge that holds most of these species. **African Rock Pipit** is often heard calling, and is occasionally seen, from above the Fonteintjies walking trail. The newly described **Karoo Long-billed Lark** *Certhilauda (curvirostris) subcoronata* (see *Auk* 116: 194–208) is common throughout the park. Other arid-zone species occurring here are **Dusky Sunbird** *Nectarinia fusca*, which is a nomad, not seen elsewhere in the Western Cape and **Pale Chanting Goshawk** *Melierax canorus*, **Pririt Batis**, **Fairy Flycatcher**, **Cape Penduline Tit** *Anthoscopus minutus* and **White-throated Canary**.

Gamka Dam on the Grootplaat has the only permanent surface water in the park and supports a host of waterbirds, including **Cape Shoveler**, **South African Shelduck** and **Yellow-billed Duck** *Anas undulata*. The cliffs near the dam have breeding **Black** and **Booted Eagles**, and **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra*. Beaufort West has several large *Eucalyptus* trees which support up to 10,000 roosting **Lesser Kestrel** *Falco naumanni* in summer; the birds disperse during the day to forage on the plains surrounding the town.

While hunting for birds, you may bump into other karroid beasts such as **Cloete's Girdled Lizard** *Cordylus cloetei*, **Braack's Dwarf Leaf-toed Gecko** *Goggia braacki* and **Thin-skinned thick-toed Gecko** *Pachydactylus kladeroderma*; all of which have minute global ranges, restricted to tiny portions of the Nuweveld escarpment. Other endemics include **Grant's Rock Mouse** *Aethomys granti*, **Namaqua Chameleon** *Chamaeleo namaquensis*, **Karoo Dwarf Chameleon** *Brachypodion karroicum*, **Greater Homopus femoralis** and **Boulenger's Padlopers** *H. boulengeri*, **Tent Tortoise** *Psammobates tentorius*, **Spotted House Snake** *Lamprophis guttatus*, **Common Long-tailed Seps** *Tetradactylus tetradactylus* and a host of endemic **lizards** and **geckos**. The park holds many species that once roamed these plains in greater numbers prior to human intervention. The threatened **Black Rhinoceros** *Diceros bicornis*, and the endemic **Cape Mountain Zebra** *Equus zebra zebra* (the second largest population in the world), **Black Wildebeest** *Connocabetes gnou* and **Springbok** *Antidorcas marsupialis* roam here. Threatened species such as **Leopard** *Panthera pardus*, **Small Spotted Cat** *Felis nigripes*, **Aardwolf** *Proteles cristata*,

Aardvark *Orycteropus afer*, **Sclater's Golden Mole** *Chlorotalpa sclateri*, **Melck's Serotine Bat** *Eptesicus melckorum*, **Lesuer's Hairy Bat** *Myotis lesueuri* and **Spectacled Dormouse** *Graphiurus ocularis* also occur in the park. Night drives can be arranged with staff and may prove spectacular, particularly if the mythical **Aardvark** is seen.

Part III—the arid interior

South Africa's arid interior does not offer the highest bird diversity, but by far the highest proportion of endemics; every second bird seen here is not seen anywhere else in the world! The closest site to Cape Town offering 'real' Karoo birds is Tankwa Karoo. Largely untouched by development and criss-crossed with dirt roads, one has to stay in Ceres or camp if wanting to spend more than a day in this area.

Ceres & Tankwa Karoo (1–2 days)—the thirstlands

• Birds: 10/10 • Scenery: 9/10 • General tourism value: 5/10

From Cape Town the easy route is to follow the National Road (N1) to just short of Worcester, where you turn north onto the R43 toward Wolseley and Ceres. Follow signposts to Ceres. Just before arriving in Ceres you traverse Mitchell's Pass and c5 km before town a small kiosk on the left-hand side, called Die Tolhuis, has a small parking lot. Occasionally **Forest Canary** and **Sweet Waxbill** forage on the grass here. The thicket of pastel green *Protea neriifolia* on the hillside is exceptionally interesting. A small dirt path behind Die Tolhuis leads to a railway. It is possible to walk beside this but beware, trains still run on this line. Search for **Protea Canary** as it is frequent here—although some time may be required to locate it and keep in mind that **Streaky-headed Canary** *Serinus gularis* is common here. Other fynbos birds abound. The mountains are excellent for **raptors** and there is a good chance of seeing **Jackal Buzzard**, **Black** and **Booted Eagles**.

Once in Ceres fill up with fuel—there will be no more fuel stations until you return to Ceres. Continue east along the R46 over Theronsberg Pass, shortly after which you traverse a small valley called Karooport (45 km east of Ceres). Karooport is easily recognised as the area where the road changes to dirt and after a kilometre changes back to tar and then finally reverts to dirt again. The river and reeds here hold **Namaqua Warbler**. Rocky crags around Karooport support **Pale-winged Starling**. The arid flats are only 20 km beyond Karooport. The rainfall gradient drops from 1,200 mm p.a. in the Ceres Mountains to as little as 180 mm p.a. around Katbakkies. As you emerge from Karooport onto

the plains start looking for **Karoo Chat**, **Yellow Canary**, **White-throated Canary**, **Southern Ant-eater-Chat**, *Myrmecocichla formicivora*, **Sickle-winged Chat**, **Pied Starling**, **Bokmakierie**, and **Jackal Buzzard** and **Pale Chanting Goshawk** perching on telephone and electricity poles.

Approximately 5 km beyond the Sutherland turn-off a number of small dams appear on the right-hand side, as well as a larger dam on a farm called Inverdoorn; all are private property, so please respect this. Stop on the road and scope for a host of waterfowl including **South African Shelduck**, **Cape Shoveler** and **Maccoa Duck**; occasionally even **flamingos** have been seen. In midsummer the dam can be dry.

Just north of Inverdoorn two isolated glacial tillite hills rise (one on each side of the road). A narrow road leads off to the east (right-hand side) hill. Park at the base and look for the main prize here—**Karoo Eremomela**. Generally scarce in the Karoo, this feisty little warbler is not uncommon here. **Rufous-eared Warbler**, **Sickle-winged Chat**, **Southern Grey Tit**, **Cape Penduline Tit**, **Spike-heeled Lark** and **Karoo Lark** are also common. The surrounding plains are reliable for **Karoo Korhaan**, and occasionally (in winter) **Ludwig's Bustard**. North of the hills, **Tractrac Chats** and **Southern Black Korhaan** are more regular and the *kelkieuyn* call of **Namaqua Sandgrouse** *Pterocles namaqua* is more evident—although getting good views is hard. It is best to look for the species at c10.00 hrs when they tend to drink. Twenty kilometres north of the tillites, a sign to Op-die-Berg and Kaggas Kamma indicates a road leading off to the left. Follow the turn for 2 km to a small gully draped in spiky aloe plants. When the valley opens into a small *Acacia*-lined rivercourse, a narrow road peels off to the left. It is possible to camp at this small picnic site, but keep in mind that facilities are basic. There is clean running drinkable water and a long-drop toilet, and not much else. This place, known as Katbakkies, is famous as being the most accessible site in South Africa for **Cinnamon-breasted Warbler**—the hardest karoo bird of all. Dubbed a “mini-rockjumper”, it often resembles a mouse more than a bird, hopping about in tiny gaps between stone slabs, it may leap out momentarily, only to bound along a koppie ridge at high speed. There are several pairs in the gorges, and walking the riverbed or over the ridge opposite the canyon entrance offers the best chance of these elusive birds. The *Acacia* woodland is productive for **Fairy Flycatcher**, **Long-billed Crombec**, **Pirit Batis**, **Cape Bunting** and **Pied Barbet**. The cliffs and rocky areas hold **Mountain Chat**, **Southern Grey Tit** and **Ground Woodpecker**. At night, **Freckled Night-jar** *Caprimulgus tristigma* has been recorded in this area and **Cape Eagle Owl** has been found on several occa-



Double-banded Coursers *Rhinoptilus africanus*
by Mike Hodgson (courtesy of BirdQuest)

sions 4–5 km from the campsite. In wet years **Black-headed Canary** and **Lark-like Bunting** can be common. **Thick-billed Lark**. **Cape Long-billed Lark** *Certhilauda (curvirostris) curvirostris* (see *Auk* 116: 194–208). **Red-capped Lark** and **Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark** occur throughout the area. **Cape Penduline Tit** and **Yellow-bellied Eremomela** *Eremomela icteropygialis* occur along rivers and in scrub throughout. **Double-banded Courser** *Rhinoptilus africanus* has been seen on the Calvinia road north of Kathakkies, particularly in areas devoid of cover. **Black-eared Sparrow-Lark** has also been very occasionally recorded breeding.

Keep your eyes peeled for other wonderful beasts, including the magnificent **Red Adder** *Bitis rubida*, globally restricted to the Tankwa Karoo and only described in 1997. **McLachlan's Girdled Lizard** *Cordylus mclachlani* and the magnificent **Armadillo Girdled Lizard** *C. cataphractus*, rolling up to expose its spiny back when threatened, are globally restricted to this tiny portion of the Karoo. Remember to bring a spotlight as a night drive in the Karoo may not yield **Lions** *Panthera leo* and **African Elephants** *Loxodonta africana*, but it is no less spectacular. Those enamoured by smaller beasts will not be disappointed; **Steenbok** *Raphicercus campestris* is common here and you may bump into other antelopes such as **Klipspringer** *Oreotragus oreotragus* and **Grey Rhebok** *Pelea capreolus*. **Genets** and **mongooses** are frequent and you may be fortunate and see **Striped Polecat** *Mustela putorius*. Some extremely rare and seldom seen mammals are found here, including **African Lynx** (Rooikat) *Felis caracal*, **Aardvark** and **Aardwolf**—both bizarre termite specialists—and **Cape Mountain Leopard** has occasionally been spotted in the gully behind the campsite.

Farther afield—the desert frontier

Orange River, Springbok & Bushmanland (4–6 days)—the diamond coast lark run

If you are feeling adventurous, an additional bounty of endemics lies in the Northern Cape. From Cape Town take the N7 to Springbok. Several **Cape Eagle Owl**

roadkills have been found at Burke's Pass, c15 km south of Springbok—suggesting that it is reasonably common here. At Springbok, either head east to Pofadder or take a loop to find the recently described **Barlow's Lark** *Certhilauda barlowi* (see *Ibis* 140: 605–619). For this species, head north on the N7 to Steinkopf and Port Nolloth on the R382 via Anenous Pass. Once in Port Nolloth, take the coast road north to Alexander Bay. Barlow's Lark occurs north of the Holgat River, but Karoo Lark also occurs here and the two do hybridise in this zone. It is therefore best to head to Alexander Bay, and then east along the road to Khubus. At Pachtvlei Picnic Area on the Orange River, a pair of **Barlow's Lark** frequents the junction at the main road. If you still have no luck, keep heading east, stop where there are dune-type slacks, which the bird prefers—it is common once you reach the turn-off to Brandkaros. Rocky outcrops here hold **Cape Long-billed Lark**. With prior organisation, it is possible to visit the Orange River Mouth at Alexander Bay (run by the Diamond Mining Alexkor. See the company's website (<http://www.diamondcoast.co.za>) to organize a permit to visit the mouth). The estuary of this, South Africa's largest river, is the only permanent wetland on one of the world's driest stretches of coast. The dunes south of the river mouth (no access) hold breeding **Damara Terns** *Sterna balaenarum*—which are occasionally seen at the mouth. Return to Springbok via Port Nolloth, as the roads via the Richtersveld are poor.

Accommodation options in Springbok include the Springbok Hotel (tel: 27-251-21161; fax: 27-2251-22257). For cheaper options check the Sugarbird Home page <http://home.mweb.co.za/kb/kbarnes> for a full listing.

Head toward Pofadder on the N14. After c100 km a small dirt road heads toward Aggenys. Take this road and look for the distinctly warm red dunes, home to **Red Lark** *Certhilauda burra*; **Karoo Lark** is absent here so there should be no confusion. Continue on toward Pofadder scanning the enormous **Sociable Weaver** *Philetairus socius* colonies for signs of **Pygmy Falcon** *Polibierax semitorquatus* which breed in these enormous nests. If you have time for diversions, head north from Pofadder on the R358; **Sabota Lark** *Mirafra sabota* is not uncommon and **Stark's Lark** *Eremalauta starki* can be found in this area. Onseepkans, on the Orange River, provides other new birds, including small flocks of **Rosy-faced Lovebird** *Agapornis roseicollis*.

Your main route should take you south of Pofadder on the R358; after c25 km, turn east on the dirt road to Kenhardt. Thirty km beyond the turn-off look for clumps of small bush interspersed with black pebbly quartz, almost entirely devoid of vegetation—this is the home of **Sclater's Lark**, a nomadic and opportunistic

species. If the fields don't bring luck, check the many small dams where the larks regularly drink, particularly those on the edges of these fields. Another nomadic Bushmanland speciality usually encountered in large numbers in this area is **Black-eared Sparrow-Lark**, and when rainfall is significant, so are **Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark** and **Lark-like Bunting**. Other, more common, larks you are likely to see are **Karoo Long-billed**, **Thick-billed**, **Red-capped**, **Karoo** and **Spike-heeled Larks**. Larks, however, are not the only bounty. The open plains also support **Burchell's *Cursorius rufus*** and **Double-banded Coursers**, **Sickle-winged**, **Karoo** and **Tractrac Chats**, **Namaqua Sandgrouse**, **Ludwig's Bustard**, **Karoo Korhaan**, **Chat Flycatcher *Melaenornis infuscatus***, **Karoo Eremomela** and **Black-headed Canary**. The wooded rivers hold **Pirit Batis** and **Namaqua Warbler**.

Other species more characteristic of the Kalahari that one is unlikely to see farther south include **Red-eyed Bulbul *Pycnonotus nigricans***, **Black-chested *Prinia* *Prinia flavicans***, **Ashy Tit *Parus cinerascens*** and **Scaly-feathered Finch *Sporopipes squamifrons***. This trip is best combined with Ceres and the Tankwa Karoo or Kalahari-Gemsbok National Park.

Kalahari-Gemsbok National Park

Sandwiched between the Nossob and Auob rivers, the Kalahari-Gemsbok—one of Africa's great national parks and South Africa's second largest—covers 960,000 ha. Along with the adjacent Gemsbok National Park in Botswana, it comprises a conservation area of over 3.6 million ha, forming the southern portion of one of the last truly great wilderness areas in Africa—the Kalahari. Cottages and camping options are available. It is worth spending one night at the camp at Twee Rivieren (park entrance), which is excellent for **owls**, and at least one night at Nossob (several hours drive from the entrance), to spend an early morning birding north of there. Only Twee Rivieren has a restaurant, the other camps have basic shops. Booking is essential and can be made via the parks reservations offices in Pretoria (tel: 27-21-343-1991; fax: 27-21-343-0905; e-mail: reservations@parks-sa.co.za) or you can contact the park at (tel: 27-54-561-0021; fax: 27-54-561-0026).

To reach the park, head to Upington via the N14 or N10, and then north on the R360, which is a dirt road, although perfectly passable by two-wheel-drive vehicles. Remember to get there before 18.00 hrs (or earlier if you are booked at Nossob), the gate closing hours. Due to the abundance of game here, raptors are a major feature of the park and over 30 species have been recorded including **Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotos***, **White-headed Vulture *Trigonoceps occipitalis***, **Martial Eagle**, **Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus***, **Brown Snake-Eagle *Circaetus cinereus***, **Black-**

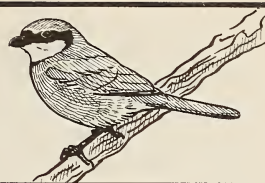


Pygmy Falcon *Polibierax semitorquatus* by Mike Hodgson (courtesy of BirdQuest)

breasted Snake-Eagle *C. (gallicus) pectoralis*, **Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax*** and the local and scarce **Red-necked Falcon *Falco chicquera***. **Secretary Bird** stalks the dunes where **Kori Bustard *Ardeotis kori*** is common; **Ludwig's Bustard** also occurs. Waterholes attract **Burchell's *Pterocles burchelli*** and **Namaqua Sandgrouse**, occasionally in large numbers. The thomveld holds Kalahari Basin birds including parties of **Pied Babbler *Turdoides bicolor***, **Kalahari Scrub-Robin *Cercotrichas paena***, **Crimson-breasted Shrike *Laniarius atrococcineus***, **Burchell's Glossy Starling *Lamprolaima australis***, **Shaft-tailed Whydah *Vidua regia***, **Barred Wren-Warbler (Southern Barred Warbler) *Calamonastes fasciolatus***, **Marico Flycatcher *Melaenornis mariquensis*** and awesome colonies of **Social Weaver** with **Pygmy Falcon** in attendance.

Following rain, a flash of colour is brought by the **finches** and **waxbills**, which occur in abundance, as a profusion of annuals and grasses flower and seed. **Black-headed** and **White-throated Canaries**, **Red-headed *Amadina erythrocephala*** and **Cut-throat Finches *A. fasciata***, and **Black-cheeked *Estrilda erythronotos*** and **Violet-eared Waxbills *Uraeginthus granatinus*** are most frequent. The Kalahari is also the haunt of a profusion of nocturnal hunters; dusk signals a chorus change and the campsites, particularly that at Twee Rivieren, resound with the calls of **White-faced Scops Owl *Otus leucotis***, **African Scops Owl *O. senegalensis***, **Pearl-spotted Owlet *Glaucidium perlatus*** and **Giant Eagle-Owl *Bubo lacteus***, and the gear-changing churning of **Rufous-cheeked Nightjar *Caprimulgus rufigena*** is ever-present. The resonant guttural grunting of **Lion** adds to the splendid nocturnal clamour. Of course, while birding you are likely to find other denizens of the desert, including **Leopard**, **Cheetah *Acinonyx jubatus***, **Spotted *Crocuta crocuta*** and **Brown Hyenas *Hyaena brunnea***, the magnificent **Gemsbok** (once thought to be the mythical unicorn), **Blue Wildebeest *Connochaetes taurinus***, **Black-backed Jackal *Canis mesomelas***, **Red Hartebeest *Alcelaphus buselaphus***, **Springbok**, **Bat-eared Fox *Otocyon megalotis*** and the fascinatingly social and gregarious **Meercat *Suricata suricata***. 🦊

c/o Percy FitzPatrick Institute, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa.



Two species new to Ethiopia

Per Ole Syvertsen

On mentionne ici la présence de deux espèces d'oiseaux encore jamais enregistrées en Éthiopie: une Sterne caugek *Sterna sandvicensis*, a été observée au lake Ziway, entre Addis Abeba et Awasa, le 15 avril 1993. Par ailleurs, deux individus appartenant soit à l'espèce Petit coucou *Cuculus poliocephalus*, soit à l'espèce Coucou malgache *C. rochii* ont été observés entre Tedim et Yabello, Borana, le 25 avril 1993.

During fieldwork in Ethiopia in 1990–1995, I made numerous ornithological observations, principally in the Rift Valley and Borana in the south of the country. Details of two species previously unrecorded from the country^{3,13} are presented here.

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

While travelling between Addis Ababa and Awasa on 15 April 1993 I stopped to check Lake Ziway from an easy access point at the south end of Ziway town (c07°55'N 38°44'E). Among a loose association of c350 gulls and terns, I noticed an adult Sandwich Tern in summer plumage. The black bill with a distinct yellow tip, the black cap and crested appearance of an otherwise nearly all grey-white tern made the identification of this common and familiar European species straightforward. Detailed field notes were not taken, and no other plumage or bare part details were recorded. No call was noted. Also present were c10 Gull-billed *Gelochelidon niloticus*, c80 Whiskered *Chlidonias hybridus* and c50 White-winged Black Terns *C. leucopterus*, and c200 Grey-headed *Larus cirrocephalus* and one adult Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus*. The perched Sandwich Tern was observed through 10x40 binoculars, at a distance of 50–100 m, and was present throughout my brief stay in the area, from 11.50–12.20 hrs.

Lake Ziway is a relatively large (almost 29 km long and 20 km wide) freshwater lake at an altitude of 1,636 m principally bordered by swamp¹⁰. The area where the Sandwich Tern was seen consists of flooded swamp with more open vegetation than the papyrus beds that dominate much of the lake shore. The record has previously been mentioned in Tilahun *et al*¹⁰ and Syvertsen¹¹, and the species was included in a recent list of Ethiopian birds⁵ on the basis of this sighting.

Sandwich Tern commonly winters on West and southern African coasts, but is less widespread in East Africa and the Red Sea, and is rare inland in Africa¹⁴. In Kenya it was first recorded in 1973 and has been near-annual since 1976, with all records in August–

April with the exception of one bird on 2 June⁸. The first inland Kenyan record was one at Lake Baringo on 2–6 November 1991¹². In Somalia, the species is rare with 12 coastal records since 1979, all in January and March–May¹. It is rare in Sudan where it has occurred once inland (two birds in Khartoum in May 1952)^{6,9}. Sandwich Tern has also been recorded as a vagrant in land-locked Mali³.

Asian Lesser Cuckoo *Cuculus poliocephalus* or Madagascar Lesser Cuckoo *C. rochii*

On 25 April 1993, I drove a track leading to the village of Tedim north of Yabello in Borana. In late morning I noticed a cuckoo of the Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* / African Cuckoo *C. gularis* type that immediately struck me as being unusually small. Observed through 10x40 binoculars at a distance of 30–50 m, the bird's structure and plumage appeared similar to that of the two larger *Cuculus* species, but it was much smaller. The body length was comparable to that of a Black Cuckoo *C. clamosus* or White-crowned Starling *Spreo albicapillus*, although direct size comparison with other species was impossible. There was no yellow at the base of the bill. It moved through the upper level of the vegetation and disappeared to the north. No call was heard. Amazingly, shortly afterwards I came across a second bird of the same type.

Both individuals were seen along the track before Tedim, at c05°00–05'N 38°10'E. The track leaves the tarmac in a westerly direction c13.5 km north of the road barrier at Yabello, and Tedim is reached after c10 km. The terrain is undulating and the vegetation is largely semi-arid *Acacia* savannah, heavily grazed by livestock in some places. The altitude is c1,500–1,650 m.

In East Africa, Asian Lesser Cuckoo occurs in east Kenya and east Tanzania in November–April and is often numerous on migration in coastal East Africa in March–April^{2,8}. There are no spring records in Somalia, although

two November occurrences have been reported in the literature¹. Asian Lesser Cuckoo appears to principally reach Africa south of Tanzania, and there is some indication that it departs in spring via the same route⁴. There are no records in the Middle East⁷ up until the end of 1998 at least (GM Kirwan pers. comm.). The Madagascar Lesser Cuckoo is a non-breeding visitor to western East Africa including Uganda, principally in April–September^{2,8}. It has not been recorded in Somalia¹. Neither species is known from Sudan or Djibouti^{3,9}.

Based on date, the two birds seen in Borana in April 1993 could have been either Asian Lesser Cuckoo on spring migration or Madagascar Lesser Cuckoo in their non-breeding range. In either case the record appears to have involved vagrants: either Asian Lesser Cuckoos far to the north-west of their normal migration route, or Madagascar Lesser Cuckoos which had wandered further north than the species has previously been recorded. ☞

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A range extension for Ankober Serin

Serinus ankoberensis

Anteneb Shimelis

Serinus ankoberensis était au paravant considéré comme endémique pour deux sites d'Ankober escarpés dans le centre des régions montagneuses d'éthiopie, et restreint à se situer entre c2,900–3,250 mètres. Certaines observations faites par l'équipe Ethiopian Important Bird Areas et un ornithologiste suédois ont, depuis décembre 1996, confirmés que l'espèce s'est considérablement répandu, et bien plus qu'auparavant, à l'intérieur de la province de Shoa, et serait également recherché dans l'adjacent Tigray. Il a été localisé dans deux IBAs—le Simien Mountains National Park et le Guasa Réserve—et aussi dans deux nouveaux sites proche de ce type de localité. On sait maintenant que son altitude vitale peut varier entre 2,600–4,250 mètres.

Ankober Serin *Serinus ankoberensis* is a recently described cliff-frequenting montane finch previously considered endemic to a tiny area of the central highlands of Ethiopia¹. It was known from two sites in Shoa province, at c2,900–3,250 m, on the edge of the eastern escarpment of the western highland massif of Ethiopia: one, 3–8 km north of Ankober (09°36'N 39°46'E), where it is considered to be restricted to an area of not more than 5 km², and the other, 3–4 km from Tarma Ber, above and south of Debre Sina town^{2,3}.

Although apparently suitable habitat exists nearby³ and at similar altitudes in many other areas of Ethiopia, no records of the species away from these two localities had been made until 3 December 1996, when a Swede—Håkan Pohlstrand—saw four birds in the Simien Mountains National Park, by the road five km west of Chennek camp at 3,500 m, and subsequently photographed a flock of at least 50 birds on a cliff ledge two km north of Bhawit at 4,250 m on 6 March 1997 (*Bull. ABC* 4: 144). This finding, which was repeated during a survey of the park on 20–27 March 1998, constituted a considerable extension of the species' known range. Additional surveys of other suitable areas since late 1997 have confirmed the species to be more widespread than previously thought.

Survey expeditions, in August 1997, by the Ethiopian Important Bird Area (IBA) Project team discovered two new sites in the vicinity of the two previous confirmed localities: at Goshmeda and Kundi (09°39'N 39°45'E). From their observations, the IBA team considered it possible that the species might also be found at Tarma Ber and further north, and at other, ecologically similar sites, eg Guasa Reserve and Simien Mountains National Park (both IBAs).

In order to search for additional populations of the species north of the type-locality (the Ankober Escarpment), in April 1998 the IBA team thoroughly surveyed almost all of Guasa Reserve (10°17'N–10°26'N and 39°47'E–39°48'E) over a period of c2 weeks and recorded over 100

birds in a very small area (10°22'N–10°23'N and 39°45'E–39°45'E) around Koreta (Korate) at 3,250 m. Common plant species in this area were *Festuca macrophylla*, *Thymus* sp., *Kniphofia foliosa* and short highland grasses.

Guasa Reserve is in the Gera Keya District of north Shoa province (part of Amhara National Regional State), c280 km from Addis Ababa and 150 km from Debre Birhan, the capital of Shoa province. The reserve, which is situated in the Afro-alpine Agroclimatic zone (mean altitude 3,200 m), covers c10,000 ha and is not officially protected but is owned by the state, who have leased the rights of use to the local community. No proposal has been designated by the government regarding the conservation of the site. The community, which is organised into local administrative structures (peasant associations), utilises the area sustainably by restricting and controlling grazing, and cutting of Guasa grass *Festuca macrophylla*.

Collection of raptors' eggs, habitat fragmentation, agricultural extension, introduction of alien plant species, eg *Eucalyptus globulus* and *Cupressus lucitanica* and development schemes (sheep farming and forestation) constitute some of the threats to the area.

On 27 May 1998, the IBA survey team paused at Deneba Wereda (north Shoa province) between the Wekolo and Lemi Peasant Associations (38°57'N 09°47'E), five km from Lemi Village and 65 kms from Alem Ketema. From previous experience of the habitat of the species, it appeared that the area might hold Ankober Serin. A short search of the area resulted in the discovery of 13 Ankober Serin just 100 m from the main road. The altitude at this locality is c2,600 m, probably the lowest recorded for the species. The site is similar to other known sites for the bird and is situated next to the all-weather road linking Addis Ababa and Alem Ketema via Muketuri.

This discovery suggests that the species might possibly be found in all ecologically similar habitats throughout the highland massifs of Amhara Regional State and parts of Tigray. It is unknown whether the species was formerly more widely distributed and considerable effort will be required to accurately establish the range of *S. ankoberensis*. It is hoped that the IBA team or others will be able to explore other suitable areas in due course, in order to plot the distribution, assess the population size and identify any possible threats to this little-known species. ♀

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Little-known African bird: Baumann's Greenbul *Phyllastrephus baumanni*

Lincoln D. Fishpool

Since its description by Reichenow in 1895 from a specimen collected in Togo, Baumann's Greenbul *Phyllastrephus baumanni*, has been recorded in five other countries in West Africa—Nigeria, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone. In none of these, however, does it appear to be common and published records of it are few. This, coupled with its nondescript appearance, a large number of potential confusion species and, until recently, the lack of any published illustrations, means that Baumann's Greenbul does indeed qualify as 'little-known'. In the course of trying to assemble a summary of just what is known of the species¹, I have, through the courtesy of James Karr, received a photograph of a living individual, taken by him at Cape Coast, Ghana in 1971. Reproduced here, the photograph will, I hope, enable accurate field identifications to be made. The photo and this commentary are intended to add to and modify some previously published notes regarding the separation of Baumann's Greenbul from other bulbul species within its range².

As can be seen, Baumann's Greenbul is a typical *Phyllastrephus* in its lack of distinctive field characters. The photograph does show a number of subtle features, which are lost or masked in skins and hence not apparent or emphasised in literature or illustrations, but which should assist identification. Thus, the top of the head from the forecrown to hindneck is olive-brown and contrasts with the front and sides of the face which are grey with paler scaly streaking. Such streaking is lacking from the lores and the area immediately behind the eye, giving the impression of an indistinct darker eye-stripe separating the paler ear-coverts and cheeks from a weakly differentiated supercilium. The bright chestnut eye is striking. The bill appears surprisingly heavy with an obviously curved culmen. Bill tip and cutting edges are pale while the rest of the upper mandible is dark. Although not evident in the photograph, the lower mandible is much paler than the upper. This is readily apparent in skins. The extent to which it is of use as a field character needs to be established. The underparts are mostly grey, but the flanks and part of the upper breast are browner which results in an indistinct breast band—apparent in some skins held in the Natural History Museum, Tring (pers. obs.).

Baumann's Greenbul does not, despite some published reports to the contrary, appear to occur in true lowland rainforest. It only penetrates well developed forest at higher altitudes, such as on Mt. Nimba on the Liberia, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire borders. Elsewhere, it is a species



Baumann's Greenbul *Phyllastrephus baumanni*, Cape Coast, Ghana, June 1971 (James Karr)

of gallery forest and thickets fringing the forest zone. Thus, the individual in this photograph was mist-netted in habitat described as 'charcoal subclimax', severely degraded forest with a low canopy, maintained in a stunted condition through the activities of woodcutters. Cape Coast is situated in the 'Southern Marginal' or 'Coastal Thicket' zone in Ghana, which extends along the coast west of Accra separating the forest zone from the Atlantic, the vegetation of which is dominated by dense scrub tangles³.

Acknowledgements

I am extremely grateful to Professor James Karr for providing his field notes, the photograph and his permission to reproduce it here. Thanks are also due to Dr Robert Prys-Jones, Natural History Museum, Tring for allowing access to skins. ♀

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The birds of Namuli, northern Mozambique: retracing Vincent's footsteps

Peter Ryan^a, Claire Spottiswoode^a, Vincent Parker^b, John Graham^a, Callan Cohen^a and Carlos Bento^c

Depuis l'expédition de Jack Vincent en 1932, aucun ornithologue n'avait visité le Mont Namuli, le pic le plus haut dans le nord du Mozambique. Vincent y avait décrit deux nouvelles espèces d'oiseaux, l'Apalis du Mont Namuli *Apalis (thoracica) lynesi* et la Grive tachetée *Arcanator orostruthus*. En novembre 1998, nous avons passé une semaine dans le massif et avons pu constater que d'importantes populations de l'apalis et de la grive, ainsi que d'une autre espèce menacée, l'Alêthe du Mont Cholo *Alethe choloensis*, y subsistent. Au total, 130 espèces d'oiseaux y ont été observées, parmi lesquelles les premières Hirondelles rousselines *Hirundo daurica* enregistrées au Mozambique. Selon nos estimations, 1,300 ha de forêt subsistent à Namuli; bien que cette forêt soit encore en bon état, elle est menacée par les feux de brousse et l'exploitation du bois de chauffe.

Mozambique has been off-limits to birders for much of the last two decades due to the civil war that wracked the country following independence. Even prior to this unrest, the poor infrastructure and reputation for diseases deterred all but the most intrepid explorers from venturing much into its interior. As a result, parts of Mozambique are among the ornithologically least known areas in Africa. This is especially true of the area between the Zambezi River and Tanzania, where most of our knowledge of the region's birds dates back to Jack Vincent's epic collecting trip of 1931–32⁵.

Vincent sought to establish the boundary between the avifaunas of southern and eastern Africa, and was especially keen to work in montane forests. The highlight of his trip was a visit to Mount Namuli, the highest mountain in northern Mozambique, where he collected two new bird species: Namuli Apalis *Apalis lynesi* (considered by *Birds of Africa* as a subspecies of Bar-throated Apalis *A. thoracica*) and Dapplethroat *Arcanator orostruthus*. Dapplethroat has since been discovered

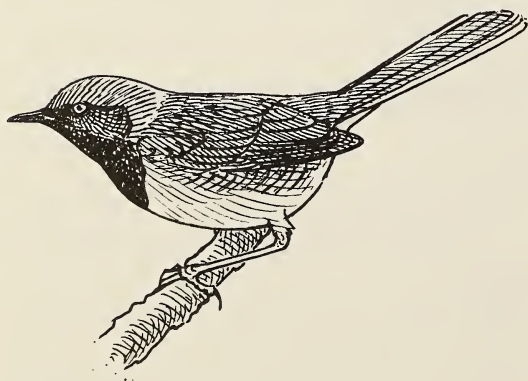
in the East Usumbara and Udzungwa Mountains of Tanzania, but the apalis is unknown elsewhere and is Mozambique's only endemic bird. Both are classified as Vulnerable¹.

Other species of global conservation concern found by Vincent at Namuli include Thyolo Alethe *Alethe choloensis*, restricted to 15 forests in southern Malawi and northern Mozambique, and the *belcheri* race of Green Barbet *Stactolaema olivacea*, found only at Thyolo and Namuli. As a result, the forest at Namuli was ranked =37th of 76 important forests in a review of the key forests for threatened birds in the Afrotropical and Malagasy regions². Namuli scored higher than Uganda's Impenetrable Forest and Kenya's Kakamega Forest, both of which have been the subject of considerable study and conservation attention. It is thus amazing that no birders have visited Namuli since Vincent's expedition, to check on the status of the forests and their birds.

Moves to rectify this were initiated by Keith Barnes in 1997 but had to be shelved due to a lack of suitable vehicles. It was only in November 1998 that the expedition could finally take place, with Keith sadly left behind because of conflicting commitments. The joy of 'rediscovering' Namuli was left to the six authors of this article.

Getting to Namuli

Much of the interior of northern Mozambique consists of a relatively level plateau at 700–800 m. The extensive massif of Namuli rises to 1,600 m above the plateau; the area above 1,200 m measures 50 x 30 km. It lies c160 km east of Mulanje, a large montane block in south-east Malawi, and the easiest access is from that country. By road, it is just 180 km from the Mozambique border at Milanje to Gurué, at the southern edge of the Namuli massif. The road is gravel, but has been rebuilt recently and one could easily travel it in a few hours. Birders will have



Namuli Apalis *Apalis lynesi* by Mark Andrews

trouble concentrating on the road, however, as it passes through large tracts of near-pristine miombo woodland with occasional dambos. We were single-minded about reaching Namuli, but the one dambo we checked held 10 Blue Quail *Coturnix adansonii* as well as Harlequin Quail *C. delegorguei*, Kumichane Button-Quail *Turnix sylvatica*, Dwarf Bittern *Ixobrychus sturnii*, Black Coucal *Centropus grillii* and African Grass Owl *Tyto capensis*. Imagine what they must hold once the rainy season starts!

Gurué is a regional centre, once famous for having the most extensive tea estates in the Southern Hemisphere. The town is slowly being rebuilt following the civil war, and the tea estates are being brought back into production. We visited the local administrator to present our credentials (CB had an impressive sheaf of official letters from Maputo to ease our way through the local bureaucracy), but we did not linger. Although the Serra Maifi, at the south edge of the Namuli massif, looms more than 1,000 m above the town, little natural vegetation remains on its slopes. Only a small, remnant forest patch clings to the near-vertical slopes above the town waterworks. This does support Namuli Apalis and many of the other forest birds, but it is not easy to work and entails a stiff climb to even reach it. Birders wanting to visit the area are better advised to concentrate on the much larger forests near the main peak.

Mt. Namuli, the highest point of the massif, at 2,412 m, is a spectacular granite dome c12 km north-east of Gurué. Vincent worked its southern slopes in 1932, and we targeted this area for study. Topographical maps marked a track leading east from Gurué and thence between the

Serra Maifi and Serra Merrece. Our enquiries at the Monte Branco tea estate produced conflicting reports as to the state of this road, but it proved not to be as bad as feared, and was being upgraded during our visit. Beyond the pass, the road contours along the gentle slopes of the Malema river valley. Bearing left at the first fork brings one to a rickety bridge over the river (look for Half-collared Kingfisher *Alcedo semitorquata* here and a spectacular roost of fruit bats on the nearby cliffs). From here it's only a few kilometres to another bridge (even more precarious than the first) at the foot of the main peak. This is a fine camping spot, within an hour's walk of Ukalini Forest.

We couldn't help but compare our trip with that undertaken by Vincent. We had made the trip from the Malawi border to the base of Mt. Namuli in a single day. Vincent took weeks to manoeuvre his vehicles to within 50 miles of the mountain, and then set off with a team of 42 porters to walk the rest of the way. En route his camp was raided by man-eating Lions *Panthera leo*, which had killed 20 people in the preceding three weeks. When he finally reached the mountain, the porters went on strike, and Vincent faced the uncertain prospect of being marooned at Namuli¹. His exploits made our trip appear simple, but we still experienced considerable satisfaction at having finally reached the goal of Vincent's travels.

Birding Namuli: base camp

Most of our observations were concentrated around the lower camp (1,250 m) and in Ukalini Forest, at the base of the main peak (1,550–1,850 m). The best birding is to be had higher up, but the lower area has its attractions, supporting a greater diversity of birds.

When Vincent visited Namuli, the valley above the campsite was forested (the Ukusini Forest)¹. This has largely been cleared for agriculture, but remnants persist along a stream, and there are patches of secondary scrub. Namuli Apalis is abundant in this remaining forest and thicket, with pairs approximately every 50 m by the river. Thyolo Alethe is also common, with pairs every 150 m in the same area. Other species that are common here but scarce or absent at higher elevations include African Broadbill *Smithornis capensis*, Little Greenbul *Andropadus virens*, Eastern Nicator *Nicator gularis*, Red-capped Robin-Chat *Cossypha natalensis*, Ashy Flycatcher *Muscicapa caerulescens* and Black-throated Wattle-eye *Platysteira peltata*.

The lower valley also supports some well-developed miombo woodland, especially on the northern slope of the valley. Birds in the miombo include Rufous-bellied Tit *Parus rufiventris*, Red-faced Crombec *Sylvietta whytii*, Mozambique Batis *Batis soror*, Miombo Double-collared Sunbird *Nectarinia*

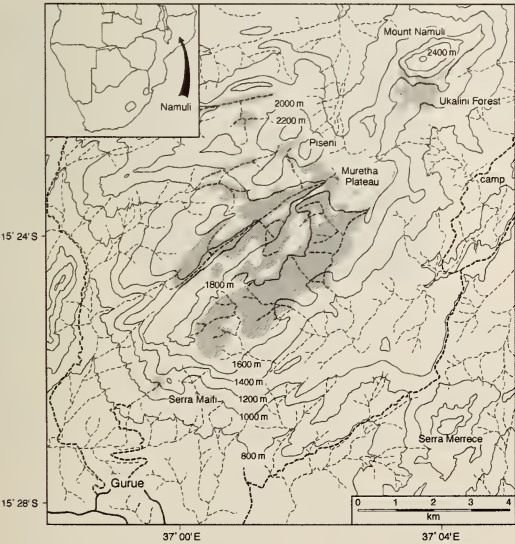


Figure 1. Map of the Namuli Massif, showing the main localities mentioned in the text. Shading indicates the extent of intact forest; bold lines indicate roads and tracks.



Black-throated Wattle-eye *Platysteira peltata* by Mark Andrews

manoensis, Western Violet-backed Sunbird *Anthreptes longuemarei* and Cabanis's Bunting *Emberiza cabanisi*. The dense miombo woodland also attracts some forest species, including the occasional Thyolo Alethe. Rank grassland around the lower camp is also worth searching for Moustached Grass-Warbler *Melocichla mentalis*, Singing *Cisticola cantans* and Croaking *Cisticola* *C. natalensis*, Red-winged Warbler *Heliolais erythroptera*, Blue-billed Firefinch *Lagonostica rubricata* and African Citril *Serinus citrinelloides*.

Ukalini Forest

At present there are no habitations above 1,350 m, and the forests above 1,500 m are largely intact. The Ukalini Forest, nestling below the impressive granite dome of Mt. Namuli, appears little changed from Vincent's descriptions and photographs. It is still the same size (c80 ha) as it was when aerial photographs were taken of the area in 1966. This is where Vincent collected his sole specimen of Dapplethroat, and it was with some excitement that we ventured forth in search of this notoriously elusive bird.

We established camp near the lower edge of Ukalini Forest, and at dusk a rich, melodious whistle set our pulses racing. Dawn the following morning confirmed that the songster was indeed Dapplethroat, and that it was rather common here. We estimated that, in at least some areas, the density was 2–3 singing birds per ha, more than double that recorded at any other site¹. The two mist-netted individuals confirmed that the nominate race, known only from Namuli, differs from the two Tanzanian races in being significantly more rufous on the wings and tail, and in having only very diffuse dappling on the throat and breast.

The other three globally threatened birds reported by Vincent were also still present in Ukalini Forest. Namuli



1



2



3

Apalis was the most abundant bird other than Eastern Olive Sunbird *Nectarinia olivacea*, with a density of c13 birds per ha. Thyolo Alethe was the fifth most abundant species, following Stripe-cheeked Greenbul *Andropadus milanjensis* and White-tailed Crested Flycatcher *Elminia albonotata*. We estimated the total population of Thyolo Alethe to exceed the 1,000 pairs estimated to occur at Mulanje³, making Namuli the single most important site for this species. The birds here are recognised as being subspecifically distinct, having paler underparts than birds farther



4



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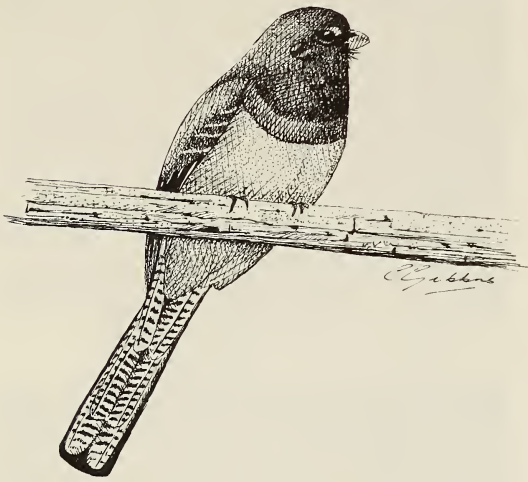
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8

1. Looming above the seemingly endless lowland plains, our first view of the Namuli massif signified the end of our three-year preparation (Claire Spottiswoode)
2. The sheer 500 m granite face of Mt. Namuli (2,412 m), the highest peak of the massif, dwarfs the 80 ha Ukalini forest. In the foreground are subsistence farmlands within *Brachystegia* woodland (Claire Spottiswoode)
3. Ukalini forest below the main peak supports strict forest specialists such as the highly localised Dapplethroat *Arcanator orostruthus* (Callan Cohen)
4. In 1932, Jack Vincent reported the curiously widespread custom of keeping a caged Yellow-eyed Canary *Serinus mozambicus* (Claire Spottiswoode)

5. The first-ever photograph of Namuli Apalis *Apalis (thoracica) lynesii*. This male was the first we found—and had a nest close to our base camp. (Claire Spottiswoode & Callan Cohen)
6. Namuli Apalis *Apalis (thoracica) lynesii* is often considered to be a subspecies of Bar-throated Apalis *A. thoracica*, but as this photograph, of a female mist-netted in Ukalini forest, demonstrates there are striking differences between the two taxa (Callan Cohen)
7. The enigmatic Dapplethroat *Arcanator orostruthus*, mist-netted in dense understorey in the high-altitude Ukalini forest. This was only the second record ever of the nominate subspecies, although it occurs at fairly high densities in undisturbed habitat (John Graham)
8. Thyolo Alethe *Alethe choloensis* was remarkably common in the forests; our fieldwork suggests that Namuli could be the most important site for this globally threatened species (Claire Spottiswoode)



Bar-tailed Trogon *Apaloderma vittatum* by Chris Gibbins

west. The *belcheri* race of Green Barbet was less abundant (perhaps only one pair every 10 ha), but still reasonably common throughout the forest and therefore also more abundant here than at Thyolo, where the population is estimated at less than 80 pairs³.

The other five species completing the ten most abundant birds were White-starred Robin *Pogonocichla stellata*, Malawi Batis *Batis (capensis) dimorpha*, Livingstone's Turaco *Tauraco livingstonii*, Yellow-streaked Bulbul *Phyllastrephus flavostriatus* and Eastern Double-collared Sunbird *Nectarinia mediocris*. Other interesting species found in Ukalini Forest included Bar-tailed Trogon *Apaloderma vittatum*, Scaly-throated Honeyguide *Indicator variegatus*, Placid (Cabanis's) Greenbul *Phyllastrephus (cabanisi) placidus*, Orange Ground-Thrush *Zoothera gurneyi*, Evergreen Forest-Warbler *Bradypterus lopezi*, Black-headed Apalis *Apalis melanocephala*, Black-fronted Bush-Shrike *Telophorus nigrifrons* and Red-faced Crimson-wing *Cryptospiza reichenovii*. Two other species found in the highland forests are represented here by endemic subspecies: Yellow-throated Woodland-Warbler *Phylloscopus ruficapilla quelimanensis* and Olive-flanked Robin-Chat *Cossypha anomala gurue*, although the latter is often subsumed within the nominate race *C. a. anomala*.

Grassland birds

Surrounding the highland forests are montane grasslands, which range from short swards on the steep granite slopes with shallow soils to taller, swampy meadows in the hollows

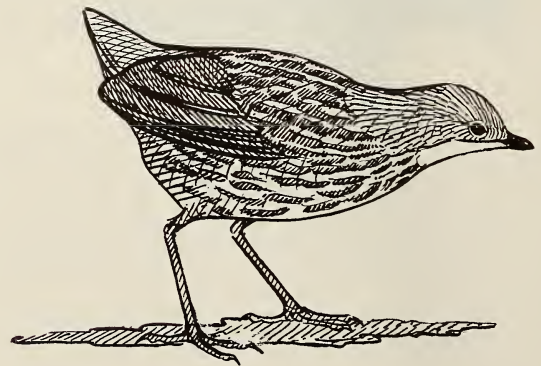
of the Muretha Plateau. These grasslands support fewer birds, but there are interesting populations of Wailing Cisticola *Cisticola lais* and a rather dark form of African Pipit *Anthus cinnamomeus* (itself considered, by *Birds of Africa*, as a race of Richard's Pipit *A. novaeseelandiae*). Other grassland species include Shelley's Francolin *Francolinus shelleyi* and Striped Pipit *Anthus lineiventri*, with Hildebrandt's Spurfowl *Francolinus hildebrandti* and African Yellow Warbler *Chloropeta natalensis* in bracken and rank grass at the forest edge.

Other noteworthy birds encountered outside the forests included Striped Flufftail *Sarothrura affinis* on the Muretha Plateau, a pair of Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* over the main peak, Cape Eagle Owl *Bubo capensis* calling in farm-bush at 1,300 m, and a large flock of Scarce Swift *Schoutedenapus myoptilus* over the foothills. We also made the first Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* record in Mozambique, with one pair apparently nesting in an outcrop in the grasslands below Mt. Namuli.

Conservation

We estimated that c1,300 ha of forest remains on the main massif between Gurué and Mt. Namuli (Fig. 1). Assuming the avifauna of the southern forests to be similar to that at Ukalini Forest, Namuli is the single most important site for at least three globally threatened species, making it probably the most critical Important Bird Area in Mozambique. It urgently requires formal conservation protection.

At present, c7,000 people live in the Malema river valley, east of the main forest. Apart from grazing their goats and feral pigs on the grasslands surrounding the forests, humans have had little impact on areas above



Striped Flufftail *Sarothrura affinis* by Mark Andrews

1,500 m. Limited logging for local use occurs in Ukalini Forest, but this does not appear to present a serious problem at current rates of exploitation. Fires are set to improve grassland grazing, but burn into the forest edge and may pose a more serious threat.

To date, their relative remoteness and the lack of access for commercial logging has protected the forests. The steep scarps along the southern and western edges of the massif limit access to the eastern side, and even here the rudimentary track to Gurué does not readily permit access. The most serious threat facing the forests is that the road to Gurué could be upgraded to the point where logging trucks could use it.

Assuming the area can be saved from commercial logging, the challenge will be to prevent the gradual degradation of the remaining forests by the slow expansion of subsistence croplands and associated activities. One way to do this is to promote ecotourism to the area, and ensure that substantial benefits from this tourism accrue to the local people. Namuli has many attractions that could make it a successful ecotourism destination: spectacular scenery, a healthy climate and clean water, and interesting wildlife including an endemic bird and squirrel. In the short term most visitors are likely to be birders seeking Namuli Apalis. Birders visiting the area are encouraged to cooperate with the local people, provide positive feedback on the conservation importance of the Namuli forests, and offer some material assistance to the local community (e.g. through camping fees, hiring guides, donating food and medicines, etc.).

Acknowledgements

We are grateful for the financial support received from a BP Conservation Award and an African Bird Club grant. 🐦

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^b Mozambique Bird Atlas, Endangered Wildlife Trust, P. Bag X11, Parkview 2122, South Africa.

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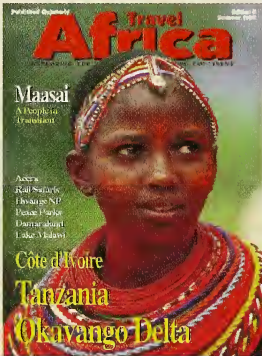
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Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* in Tanzania and its status in Africa

Ron Demey^a and Nik Borrou^b

Un Aigle criard *Aquila clanga* a été vu près de Hedara, dans le nord de la Tanzanie, le 31 décembre 1998. Ceci constitue la première observation directe de cette espèce dans le pays: sa présence en Tanzanie avait toutefois déjà été constatée par satellite en 1996 et 1997, grâce à un individu équipé d'un émetteur radio. L'Aigle criard est un visiteur Paléarctique assez rare sur le continent. Un aperçu est présenté de sa distribution africaine. Vu la rareté de l'espèce, il est estimé que 10 à 20 individus seulement hivernent au sud de l'équateur.

On 31 December 1998, we found a Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* near Hedara (=Hedaru), northern Tanzania (04°30'S 37°54'E). The bird had been feeding on a Kirk's Dik-dik *Madoqua kirkii* along a tarmac road. On our approach it flew to a small *Acacia*, where it perched beside a Tawny Eagle *A. rapax* and allowed prolonged observation from a distance of c25 m. It was a very dark, uniformly blackish brown, rather stocky and massive eagle, noticeably larger and heavier than its pale fulvous-brown companion. The bill was bluish grey with a yellow cere and the yellow gape extended to below the centre of the eye, which was dark.

After having observed the birds at length through binoculars and telescopes, we flushed them in order to observe their flight patterns. In flight, the larger eagle had a more compact shape than the Tawny Eagle, with broad wings, a relatively short, rounded tail and a less protruding head. Flight and tail feathers appeared uniformly blackish. There was no contrast between the wing-coverts and flight feathers. Other features included a narrow whitish crescent on the uppertail-coverts, a small pale patch on the back, and a small pale patch, formed by whitish feather shafts, at the base of the blackish primaries.

The combination of large size, compact shape, uniform blackish brown plumage, medium gape length and dark eye colour are characteristic of adult Greater Spotted Eagle (Forsman 1999). Lesser Spotted Eagle, the principal confusion species, typically has a more contrasting, paler brown plumage, in which the paler wing-coverts contrast with the darker remiges. It also has a pale, not dark, iris^{4,6}. Steppe Eagle has a conspicuously long gape extending to below the rear of the eye.

This appears to be the first sighting of Greater Spotted Eagle in Tanzania, although the species has recently been tracked by satellite above Tanzanian territory. The male of a pair fitted with a satellite transmitter on its breeding grounds in Biebrza National Park, north-east Poland, in July 1996, was tracked to its wintering grounds in Zambia, via Uganda and western Tanzania; it crossed the Tanzania–Zambia border on 17 or 18 December 1996. The

following year, on 23 November, the same bird was once again located in Tanzania, 20 km north of the Zambian border and 54 km east of Lake Tanganyika, before it returned to exactly the same wintering site in South Luangwa National Park⁷.

The species, which is classified as Vulnerable², is a rare Palearctic winter visitor to Africa. In Egypt, it is a rare winter visitor and passage migrant through Sinai and the Red Sea Mountains during mid-September–early May⁵. Most birds reaching sub-Saharan Africa appear to winter in the Ethiopian highlands, where the species has been recorded from October–March¹⁵. In Eritrea it was formerly reported as a common passage migrant in November, with some birds wintering¹¹; its present status is unknown. In Sudan it has been recorded a few times on passage in November and February–April in the northern and eastern parts of the country⁸. There are 12 accepted records from Kenya, principally from the vicinity of the Rift Valley lakes¹⁶. The satellite-tracked bird mentioned above constituted the first definite record south of Kenya; it was also the first species to be admitted to the Zambian list without having been seen by an observer within Zambia⁶. The same should now apply to the Ugandan list: although included by Britton¹, the species was subsequently removed from the list because no satisfactory substantiation could be obtained from the observer⁹ and it has not subsequently been reported from the country^{3,10}. There is a possible sighting from South Africa, at Nylsvlei in early 1998, but this has yet to be confirmed⁶.

In West Africa, Greater Spotted Eagle has only been recorded with certainty in Chad and Cameroon. In Chad, a female was trapped near N'Djamena on 22 January 1971¹⁵ and the female of the pair tracked by satellite in 1996 spent the winter in the country⁷. In Cameroon, the species has been observed twice in the north, in February and / or April 1973, but has not been reported since^{12,13}.

Given the species' rarity, Meyburg *et al.*⁷ estimate that probably only 10–20 birds may winter south of the Equator.

Acknowledgements

The observation of the Greater Spotted Eagle in Tanzania was made during a Birdquest tour. We thank our companions in the field: C. & A. Allen, G. Field, B. Finch, F. & J. Hooijmans, R. Smith and R. Swinnen. Robert J. Dowsett is thanked for comments on a draft of this note. ♀

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The Little Swift *Apus affinis* in Madagascar

Charles T Collins

A Madagascar, le Martinet des maisons *Apus affinis* n'est connu que d'un spécimen du 19^{ème} siècle et par quelques observations de 2–5 oiseaux de septembre 1989 à novembre 1991. Fin octobre 1998, l'auteur a observé à deux reprises un couple de cette espèce effectuant la parade à ailes relevées, à Antananarivo. Les oiseaux semblaient passer la nuit ou nicher dans les environs, mais aucune observation directe d'oiseaux entrant dans une cavité propice n'a été faite. La ville possède de nombreux sites favorables à la nidification de l'espèce.

Until recently, the status of the Little Swift *Apus affinis* in Madagascar has been unclear. It was first recorded by M Bojer based on a bird captured on the west coast in 1824¹. However, in the absence of subsequent observations of this easily identified swift, its inclusion in the avifauna of Madagascar was questioned². Its status was recently reviewed³ and sight records of 2–5 individuals on three occasions during September 1989–November 1991 appeared to confirm its presence, at least in small numbers, in Madagascar. Morris & Hawkins⁵ report that sightings over Antananarivo have been regular since 1987 and that other records come from Mt. Amber, with most in September–October. I report here an additional sighting, in October 1998, and possible indication of breeding.

At dusk on 24 October 1998 and again during 07.00–07.30 hrs on 25 October, I saw two Little Swifts circling low over the city of Antananarivo, Madagascar. On both occasions, observations were made from a balcony at the rear of the Hotel Colbert in the city centre. The swifts circled low over buildings c200 m away in the same manner these swifts use when preparing to enter or leave a nocturnal roost (pers. obs.). Clear views with 8x binoculars of the white rump, and square, unforked, tail left no doubt as to

the identity of the birds. M Thompson (pers. comm.) independently identified the birds as this species. The two birds often flew near each other and on several occasions gave the gliding raised wing courtship 'v-display' that has previously been recorded for this species¹. This suggests these birds were a pair and probably nesting or about to nest nearby. Non-breeding birds or casual visitors to the area would not have given the v-display. What was probably the same pair was seen again at dusk on 30 October 1998, from the same vantage, and again appeared to be roosting in this area. On both occasions, the distance and light conditions precluded observation of the birds actually entering a roost / nest site.

These observations supplement earlier sight observations of the species in Madagascar³ and support its inclusion in the island's resident avifauna. Little Swift regularly utilises man-made structures for nesting, and the abundance of suitable sites in the area of observation suggests that their numbers may increase in the future. ☞

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Little Swift *Apus affinis* by Mark Andrews

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*: the first record for Seychelles

Adrian Skerrett

Un Fuligule nyroca *Aythya nyroca* adulte en plumage nuptial a été observé à Police Bay, Mahé, le 26 mai 1998. Cette observation a été acceptée par le Comité d'Homologation des Seychelles comme la première pour les îles.

During 1998, I spent much time working with Gérard Rocamora compiling the first inventory of Important Bird Areas in Seychelles. As a part of our research, we identified potential sites of importance for Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis*, an Asian species that, in the Afro-Malagasy region, breeds only in Seychelles. One such site is Police Bay, near the southern tip of Mahé.

On paper, Police Bay was an exciting prospect, possessing one of the largest surviving areas of coastal plateau wetland in Seychelles. Data were lacking because the site had been closed to the public for more than 15 years, due to the establishment of an army base and high security prison. Surprisingly, we obtained permission to visit the site with remarkable ease.

We arrived shortly after daylight on 26 May 1998 and, while walking around the edge of the marsh, we soon located Yellow Bitterns and a couple of additional surprises. The first appeared to be a hybrid duck, which I had seen some months earlier at Roche Caiman Bird Sanctuary. I had sent photographs to Steve Madge who had identified it as a probable Muscovy *Cairina moschata* x Pacific Black Duck *Anas perspicillata*. Next was first one, then two, juvenile Purple Herons *Ardea purpurea*. This vagrant was known from 17 previous records accepted by Seychelles Bird Records Committee. Our sighting was a little surprising, the majority of reports being during October–December.

Gérard and I separated to investigate different areas of the wetland. I climbed a sloping granite glaci overlooking the marsh to survey the widest possible area. From this vantage, I soon re-located the hybrid duck. However, this time it was in the company of another smaller pochard-like duck. After five minutes, Gérard joined me and we viewed the bird with his telescope.

It was a very small, relatively compact duck with a large head and high crown. The plumage was mainly reddish chestnut-brown, the feathers of the head and breast shining in the bright morning sunlight. The flanks were of

similar coloration, lacking sheen, the back blackish. A neat white triangle was obvious on the undertail. The bill was blackish with grey edges, and broadened near the tip. A white iris was obvious in clear contrast to the surrounding plumage. Obliging it flapped its wings at one stage to reveal a broad white wingbar. The bird was relatively active and dived many times, remaining submerged on each occasion for c10 seconds. We identified the bird as a male Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*.

Ferruginous Duck breeds discontinuously from western Europe to western Mongolia, with isolated populations in Libya east to north-east Pakistan. It winters from the Mediterranean (where it is perhaps sedentary) to sub-Saharan Africa, principally north of the Equator, and through the Caspian Sea, Middle East, northern India and at some sites in south-east Asia¹. In East Africa, it is a scarce migrant during December–March².

Details were submitted to the Seychelles Bird Records Committee and the record was accepted by that body as the first for the islands. It is extremely unusual for any vagrant to be recorded in Seychelles at this time of year. Some waders, probably first-year birds, spend the northern summer in Seychelles but, in breeding plumage, any Palearctic species is a rare sight in the archipelago. Researchers looking for Madagascar Pochard *A. innotata* are advised to carefully eliminate vagrant *A. nyroca* when identifying *Aythya* species in this area of the southern Indian Ocean. ♀

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Reviews



Where to watch birds in Uganda

Johnathan Rossouw and Marco Sacchi. 1998. 110 pp, many colour photographs and maps. Uganda Tourist Board. UK£14.99.

I first saw this publication when Sean Mann of the Uganda Tourist Bureau handed me the 110 photocopied pages to read at Murchison Falls National Park. I perused the sheets, and was so impressed with what I was reading that I thought that this could set new standards in bird-finding guides, it being so packed with useful up-to-the-moment information. When the book was published, gamished generously throughout with high standard colour photographs, I knew that I was looking at one of the world's top site guides, if not the best.

Uganda is one of the best kept birding secrets, not deliberately, but the shadows of the former horrendous regimes still hang like a cloud only now starting to lift from memory. Uganda is a country full of contrasts, beauty and birds, the people are more than just friendly and their warmth is genuine. All this is conveyed in the book, and the design to promote Uganda as a mecca for ornithology deserves to come to fruition, for it truly is.

To turn to the book, I will come straight to the one oversight, that will become apparent to the reader, and which is the omission of the chapter on Mabira Forest near Jinja. While the very informative map is present the text has not made it to publication. This is a sad piece of confusion, although the chapter was written. (The Mabira chapter has now been printed and is being inserted as an errata sheet in the book.) Hereafter the publication will receive only the praise it rightly deserves.

The authors are visitors to the East African region, but have shown that they have come to grips with one of the planet's most extensive avifaunas, given the relatively small land area, in an astoundingly short time. The back of the book (perhaps a contrary place to start) shows the richness of the area. The 1,017 species on the Ugandan list at the time of writing, are detailed as far as distribution and frequency in the systematic check-list (which also includes Mabira Forest). This has been well researched, and while knowledge

of distribution is an on-going process, and Uganda continues to produce surprises, it would be impossible to find a more useful chart to assist the visitor. Any species seen in any of the 15 locations, not listed as occurring in the relevant locality, should be reported in the interests of completeness as the authors request. There are omissions, not through any fault of the authors, but from private observations over a far greater time frame than available to them, and I shall go through the list and furnish any additions, as I hope that other visitors will do. These charts provide a fine base on which to build. The very few species unrecorded from the 15 sites, have their records detailed: one error that I noticed was that the record of Dybowski's Twinspot *Euschistospiza dybowskii* should read as north-western Uganda, not south-western.

Before entering into the site-by-site guide, we are treated to a wealth of very useful information, covering such varied subjects as: recommended itineraries, park entrance, code of conduct, literature and accessibility, health recommendations, and a most useful list of addresses. Thorough absorption of this material will ensure a more comfortable and rewarding visit to Uganda.

The chapters covering the sites to be visited are so well presented, clear and concise, where to see what and when, (and even how!), the maps are detailed to the extreme and easy to follow, setting standards it will be difficult for others to follow. As well as the birds, mammals where also of interest are additionally listed; in fact the more one looks into these chapters the more gems are found.

To my mind this surpasses any other site guide produced for Africa, the authors cannot be congratulated enough for their presentation standards, nor can the Uganda Tourist Board (UTB) be praised sufficiently for their generous participation in the production. It is so good to see one tropical African country, at least, recognising the importance of its wealth of avifauna, and as such UTB must also share congratulations in the recognition of the importance of ecotourism.

Come to Uganda with Johnathan and Marco's birding bible, and experience the birdwatching experience of a lifetime.

Brian Finch

Robins of Africa

Terry Oatley and Graeme Arnott. 288 pp, 36 colour plates, 50 line-drawings and 33 maps. Acorn Books & Russell Friedman Books, Cape Town. UK£54.

This monograph deals with the species of robins endemic to Africa. It is attractively produced and Graeme Arnott has illustrated each species in colour. There are also many fine line drawings scattered throughout the text.

Before reviewing any book, it is necessary to determine the target audience. Unlike many monographs, Terry Oatley's text is not written in a scientific manner and will be enjoyed by a wide range of people including scientists, birders and even those who have only a passing interest in birds. References in the text are kept to a minimum to ensure readability.

The first part of this work describes the distribution, habitat requirements, vocalisations and breeding biology of each of the 33 species. My immediate reaction to this was, as with most other groups of birds in Africa, how little is known of the species occurring outside South Africa and some species have barely a page of text. The plates are pleasing and the line drawings illustrating the bird's habitat or aspects of the birds' behaviour are excellently done, and really capture the nature of these species.

The second part of the book covers various aspects of robin ecology and behaviour and includes chapters on song, feeding ecology, migration, population biology, evolution and conservation. This is an enjoyable account of the author's research into this attractive group and includes some memorable quotes from past authors such as David Lack, James Chapin and Henry Stanley. These chapters are not only a discussion of robins but also an introduction to various ecological and evolutionary theories written in such a way that non-scientists can understand and form opinions.

The text is well written and informative although, when presented with an interesting fact, I was frustrated that it was not referenced. The information for the species that occur in southern Africa is well researched but for some species occurring elsewhere, information is lacking. Overall, the book is a fascinating read and should be

obtained by those with an interest in this group.

Phil Atkinson

Rails. A Guide to the Rails, Crakes, Gallinules and Coots of the World

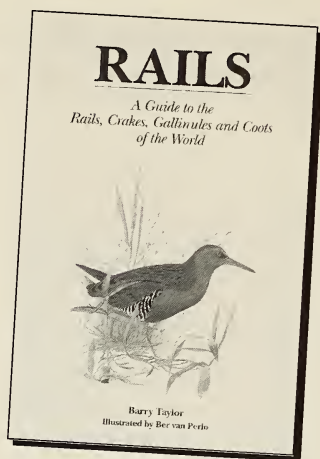
Barry Taylor. Illustrated by Ber van Perlo. 1998. 600 pp, 43 colour plates, many distribution maps and several line drawings. Pica Press, The Banks, Mountfield, Nr. Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5JY. UK£35.00.

For most birders the secretive habits of many of the Rallidae mean that encounters with members of this family are often fleeting and unsatisfactory. The publication of this book allows us to gain a much greater insight into the complex life history of the 150 species that comprise the family Rallidae. This total includes 133 extant species, two of which—Talaud Rail *Gymnocyrtus talaudensis* and Talaud Bush-hen *Amaurornis magnirostris*—were described as recently as 1998, 15 that have become recently extinct (since 1600) and two others that are almost certainly extinct. Many of these extinctions have, of course, been as a direct or indirect result of man's activities, and so the inclusion of these species is to be welcomed, as it illustrates just how much we have lost over the past 400 years.

The format follows the familiar style of these publications, with introductory sections dealing with taxonomy, phylogeny, distribution and general biology of rails, and briefly discusses some of the conservation issues associated with the family. These sections provide fascinating reading and despite the large gaps in our knowledge of rails are usually more comprehensive than similar sections in some other titles in this series.

Ber van Perlo's 43 colour plates depict all living species and 12 of those that have become recently extinct. They are well executed and whilst they will perhaps not be to everyone's taste, van Perlo's bold style works well with this family. The inclusion of more background vegetation makes for a more attractive overall effect than is the case in some other titles. All species with which I am familiar appear to be accurately illustrated, with many but not all of the various subspecies being included. Helpfully, those subspecies not illustrated are described on the facing page with reference to subspecies that have been depicted. The provision of a scale on each plate is a useful feature.

The species accounts vary in length from just under one page for little-known



and extinct species such as the White Gallinule *Porphyrio albus*, to over 11 pages for well-studied species such as the Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*. All the accounts are well written and the treatment, especially of habitat, food and feeding, habits, social organisation, social and sexual behaviour, and breeding and survival is more comprehensive than has often been the case in the other titles in this series. With a secretive family such as this, there are of course many gaps in our knowledge. However, the number of undescribed or unknown aspects of many species' life histories should act as a spur for future researchers to plug these gaps. The distribution maps are clear and easy to comprehend and significant efforts have been made to clearly depict the ranges of the sometimes large numbers of subspecies involved.

Taxonomy follows the treatment of Olson's 1973 classification, modified by more recent studies where relevant. Areas where taxonomy is poorly understood are clearly indicated. Doubtless Taylor will disappoint some readers with his cautious approach toward the adoption of some recently proposed splits. For example, although there are recent studies of Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio* indicating that the forms *madagasacriensis*, *pulverulentus*, *melanotos*, *poliocephalus* and *indicus* may warrant specific status, all are retained within a single species pending further study and evaluation.

Throughout the entire volume, the text appears to be very thorough and, in addition to the large number of correspondents listed in the acknowledgements section, has been compiled using over 1,800 references, which are listed in the comprehensive bibliography. The author states in his introduction that this book

is designed to be a comprehensive guide and handbook to the rails of the world. He certainly appears to have succeeded in his aim, and has produced what will doubtless become a standard work on this fascinating family for years to come.

Chris Bradshaw

Namibia Soundscapes

Anthony Walker. 1997. 57-minute CD with 24 pp booklet in French and English. Sittelle. Available from Wildsounds, Cross Street, Salthouse, Norfolk NR25 7XH, UK. UK£11.99 (UK and EC), UK£10.20 (non-EC) plus postage & packing.

This CD comprises 13 'concerts' (periods of continuous recording), which span 51 tracks. The recordings were made at five different sites, either at different times of the day, or in different habitat types. It is similar to the other CDs in the Soundscapes series and is not an attempt to produce an identification guide to the vocalisations of Namibian birds. Anyone looking for a sound identification guide should search elsewhere: as the number of bird species covered by this CD—59—is not comprehensive and would leave too many gaps for anybody seriously interested in learning vocalisations before a trip. However, if you are looking for a CD with atmospheric sounds from Namibia that is coupled with a chance to learn some of the calls/songs you are likely to encounter when you are there then this CD is for you. The recordings are of a high quality and far more realistic in terms of what you will hear when in the field than the, often isolated, species recordings that you hear on identification tapes/CDs. The subdividing of the 'concerts' into tracks allows most calls/songs to be identified and certainly brings back happy memories of a wonderful country.

The booklet describes the 13 'concerts' and also the tracks that comprise each of these. The 'concert' descriptions detail the localities and times at which each recording was made and also include verbal descriptions of some of the birds and other animals contributing to that particular concert. The track descriptions primarily list the species included on that section of the recording. However, it is worth noting that species mentioned earlier in a 'concert' often aren't mentioned in subsequent tracks within that 'concert'. Helpfully, sounds made by mammals, reptiles and insects are also mentioned in the concert descriptions and the more detailed track listings.

In conclusion I would probably buy this CD just to listen to, although if I was planning a trip to Namibia I would also buy a comprehensive set of identification CDs to really familiarise myself with the birdsong.

Roy Hargreaves

Wild Africa

Eloisa Matheu. 1996. 56-minute CD with booklet in French and English. Sitele. Available from Wildsounds, Cross Street, Salthouse, Norfolk NR25 7XH, UK. UK£11.99 (UK and EC), UK£10.20 (non-EC) plus postage & packing.

Almost an hour of soundscapes recorded in some of East Africa's greatest national parks, such as the Masai Mara and Ngorongoro.

African Sounds at Dusk

Anthony Walker. 1995. 62-minute minute CD with booklet in French and English. Sitele. Available from Wildsounds, Cross Street, Salthouse, Norfolk NR25 7XH, UK. UK£11.99 (UK and EC), UK£10.20 (non-EC) plus postage & packing.

Over an hour of evocative avian and reptilian 'concerts' recorded at dusk in Zimbabwe and Botswana. The seven species of frog and toad all calling at the same time has to be heard to be believed!

Animal Calls of Africa

Alan Reid. 1997. Gillard Bird Cassette Production. Available from Wildsounds, Cross Street, Salthouse, Norfolk NR25 7XH, UK. UK£13.99 (UK and EC), UK£11.91 (non-EC) plus postage & packing.

Calls of 40 species of bird and mammal are included, including the 'Big Five'—buffalo, elephant, leopard, lion and white rhinoceros.

The Bird Calls of the Kruger National Park. Vol 1

1993. 70-minute CD. South African Broadcasting Corporation. Available from Wildsounds, Cross Street, Salthouse, Norfolk NR25 7XH, UK. UK£13.99 (UK and EC), UK£11.91 (non-EC) plus postage & packing.

Songs and calls of some of the diverse selection of bird species found in South Africa's Kruger National Park. Ninety-nine species are included. 

Rob Lucking



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Recent Reports



These are largely unconfirmed records published for interest only; all dates refer to 1999 unless otherwise stated. We thank all birders who have sent in their records and urge them to submit full details to the relevant national or regional organisations. It is suggested that observations of each species be compared with relevant literature to set new data in context and that observers who are unfamiliar with the status of birds in a particular country refer to R.J. Dowsett and A.D. Forbes-Watson *Checklist of Birds of the Afrotropical and Malagasy Regions* or more recent or appropriate sources before submitting records.

Azores

A **Snow Bunting** *Plectrophenax nivalis* was at Faja Grande, Flores, on 6–8 November 1998 (*Dutch Birding* 20: 313).

Botswana

A record number of 421 **Wattled Cranes** *Bugeranus carunculatus* was counted at Pom Pom Camp, Okavango Delta, on 17–20 May 1998 (*PE&GW* per DW).

Cameroon

Up to 50 **Scarce Swifts** *Schoutedenapus myoptilus* seen in February at 1,900–2,200 m on Mt. Manenguba constituted the first record of this species from the West African mainland. Among 14 montane forest birds found for the first time on this massif, were the following restricted-range species: **White-naped Pigeon** *Columba albinucha* (at 2,100 m the highest Cameroon record), **Grey-headed Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus poliocephalus*, **Crossley's Ground-**

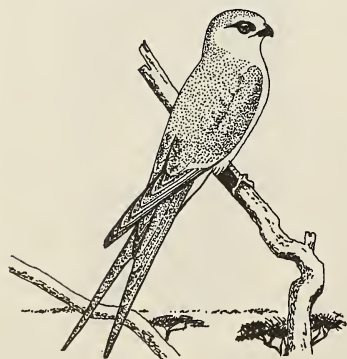
Thrush *Zoothera crossleyi*, **White-throated Mountain Babbler** *Kupeornis gilberti* (abundant), **Ursula's Mouse-coloured Sunbird** *Nectarinia ursulae* and **Green-breasted Bush-Shrike** *Malaconotus gladiator*. Mt. Nlonako produced some unexpected species at 1,150 m in mid-February, including **Brown Nightjar** *Caprimulgus binotatus* and **Maned Owl** *Jubula lettii*. **Lowland Akalat** *Sheppardia cyornithopsis* (recorded at 1,150 m, only the second record north of the Sanaga) was found to be replaced by **Bocage's Akalat** *Sheppardia bocagei* at 1,200 m. The range-restricted **Cameroon Montane Greenbul** *Andropadus montanus* was also an addition to the Nlonako list.

During surveys in the Bénoué and Faro National Park, in March, **Golden-tailed Woodpecker** *Campethera abingoni*, recorded only once before in Cameroon, was found to be common in the riparian forests along the Bénoué and Faro rivers. **Dorst's Cisticola** *Cisticola dorsti* appeared widespread and locally common in short, open woodland. **Adamawa Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia hypopyrrha* was singing in Borassus palms along the Bénoué and may be more common in this area than on the Adamaoua. Also recorded were **White-throated Francolin** *Francolinus albigularis* (common), **Rufous-rumped Lark** *Pinarocorys erythropygia* (locally common), **Yellow Penduline Tit** *Anthoscopus parvulus*, and the rare **Emin's Shrike** *Lanius gubernator*.

A brief visit to Lobéké Game Reserve in the south-east of the country in April produced yet more records of **Ja River Warbler** *Bradypterus grandis* (exclusively in *Rhynchospora* marsh) and a first record of **Tessmann's Flycatcher** *Muscicapa tessmanni*. Steady northward passage of **Lesser Spotted Eagle** *Aquila pomarina* was observed on 13–19 April, with up to 12 a day (*FDL & RJD*).

The rarely recorded **White-backed Night Heron** *Gorsachius leuconotus* was observed near Ebianemeyong, Campo Forest Reserve, on 30 March. A record number of c50 **Yellow-billed Duck** *Anas undulata* was at Dang Lake, Ngaoundéré on 10 April (*RD*). At least eight **Swallow-tailed Kites**

Chelictinia riocourii and two nests were seen south of Waza on 2 April (*NB*). An adult **Booted Eagle** *Hieraetus pennatus* was seen at Lake Oku on 7 February and an adult **Brown Snake-Eagle** *Circaetus cinereus* near Yoko on 18 March; there are few previous records for Cameroon, all from the north. **Ayres Hawk-Eagles** *Hieraetus (dubius) ayresii* were recorded at Nkolbisson, Yaoundé, on 19 February (one), near Ngambé Tikar on 16 March (one), and near Matsari on 20 March (a pair); there are few certain records of this species (see pp 115–116). A flock of 83 **European Hobbies** *Falco subbuteo* flew over Ngaoundaba Ranch on 10 April. An adult **Brown-chested Plover** *Vanellus superciliosus* was seen with two juveniles at Mayo Darlé on 6 April; there are few breeding records of this species. Five **Temminck's Stints** *Calidris temminckii* were observed on a sandbank in Mbam River near Magha on 1 March; there were only two previous records, both singles in the north. At least six **Whiskered Terns** *Chlidonias hybridus* were seen at Rio del Rey, on 16 February; the only published records for Cameroon are from the north. Two **Thick-billed Cuckoos** *Pachycoccyx audeberti*, seen and heard 60 km south of Tibati, on 12 April, apparently constitute only the second record for the country. A singing **Brown Nightjar** *Caprimulgus binotatus* was seen and tape-recorded at Ebianemeyong, Campo FR, on 27 March. A small colony of 25 **White-rumped Swifts** *Apus caffer* was found between Banyo and Tibati on 6 April and two more birds were seen near Tibati on the same day; *The Birds of Africa* mentions only one previous record, from Ngaoundéré. Records of **Horus Swift** *Apus borus*, at the bridge over the River Kim near Ngambé Tikar on 15 March (one) and at the bridge near Tibati on 6 April (1–2), constitute new localities for a species that was first recorded in Cameroon in 1992, near Ngaoundaba Ranch (*RD*). At least 80 **Alpine Swifts** *Apus melba* circled over Ngaoundaba Ranch on 7 April (*NB*) and 20 were there the next day (*RD*); there are only four previously



Swallow-tailed Kite *Chelictinia riocourii* by Nik Borrow (courtesy of BirdQuest)

published records for Cameroon. One or two **European Sand Martins** *Riparia riparia* stayed near Ngambé Tikar, in the company of other hirundines, on 15–17 March, and one was seen near Ntui on 13 April; there are few documented records of this species, all from the north. **Red-throated Pipits** *Anthus cervinus* were seen on the summit of Mt. Oku on 3 March (c20), at Dang Lake, Ngaoundéré, on 10 April (11), and at Dibi marsh, Ngaoundaba, on 11 April (40+); the few previous records are all from the north. A male **Eastern Wattled Cuckoo-Shrike** *Lobotos oriolinus* was seen at Ebianemeyong, Campo FR, on 27 March. The rarely observed **Black-eared Ground-Thrush** *Zoothera cameronensis* was found in gallery forest near Matsari on 14 April. Two pairs of **Yellow-breasted Apalis** *Apalis flavida* were observed at Ngaoundaba Ranch, on 8–11 April; there is only one published record, from Korup NP, but the species has been recorded at Ngaoundaba several times recently. The endemic **Bamenda Apalis** *Apalis bamendae* was found at several new localities, and as low as 900 m, at Mayo Darlé on 7 April and along the road from Tibati to Yoko on 12–13 April. A **Gosling's Apalis** *Apalis goslingi* was singing along the Nyong River at Ebogo, Mbalmayo, on 4 April. In some **Violet-backed Hyliotas** *Hyliota violacea*, observed at Campo FR on 28–30 March, the white wing patch was much larger than described in the literature and appeared to be similar in size to the patch shown by *H. australis*; the precise identity of these birds would be worthy of further research. An adult female of the rarely recorded **Verreaux's Batis** *Batis minima* was found in a mixed bird party at Ebogo, Mbalmayo, on 4 April (RD). A **Mount Kupe Bush-Shrike** *Malaconotus kupeensis* was observed along Max's trail at c1,100m on 23 March. A single male **Vieillot's Black Weaver** *Ploceus nigerrimus* of the race *castaneofuscus* was found in a breeding colony at Mundemba, in March (NB).

Canary Islands

Five **Madeiran Oceanodroma castro** and 16 **Leach's Storm-Petrels** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* were seen between Gran Canaria and Tenerife on 11 December 1998. A **Black-necked Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis* at La Guancha, Tenerife was still present on 16 December 1998. A **Red-billed Tropicbird** *Phaethon aethereus* was

observed off Playa Santiago, La Gomera on 11 March. The first **Great Blue Heron** *Ardea herodias* for the islands stayed at Embalse de la Cruz Santa, Tenerife from 5–30 December 1998. A **Sacred Ibis** *Threskiornis aethiopicus* of unknown origin was at Maspalomas, Gran Canaria on 3 March. A flock of 21 **Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* was seen on Gran Canaria in December 1998. Eight **Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis* (two males, six females) at Roquito del Fraile, Tenerife were still present in February. Single female **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris* were present at Los Silos and at Presa de Curbelo, Tenerife from December–February. A **Bonelli's Eagle** *Hieraetus fasciatus* at El Hierro on 3 March was the first for the island and possibly the third for the Canaries. Also on El Hierro, a **Booted Eagle** *Hieraetus pennatus* stayed from 3–17 March at least, and another was seen near Betancuria, Fuerteventura on 26 March. A **Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus* was reported from Barranco de Río Cabras, Fuerteventura on 19 March. The first **Merlin** *Falco columbarius* for El Hierro, and the fourth for the archipelago, was seen at Sabinosa on 4 March. A **Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus* was south of El Cotillo, Fuerteventura on 22 March. A **Baillon's Crane** *Porzana pusilla* stayed at Tejina, Tenerife until 30 March at least. An **Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta* at Roquito del Fraile on 26 February was a significant record. Two **American Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis dominica* were at El Médano, Tenerife on 4 March. A **Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* was at Los Alares, Fuerteventura on 7 December 1998. A **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia* remained at Las Galletas from 17 February to the second week of April at least, while another was reported from Maspalomas, Gran Canaria on 2 March. A bird showing characters of **Wilson's Snipe** *Gallinago (gallinago) delicata* was claimed from Embalse de Valle Molina, Tenerife on 9 December 1998. An adult **Glaucous Gull** *Larus hyperboreus* staying at Puerto de la Cruz from 18–25 February at least constitutes the first record for Tenerife and apparently only the fourth for the Canaries. A **Roseate Tern** *Sterna dougallii* was seen at Corralejo, Fuerteventura on 21 March, and a **Little Swift** *Apus affinis* at El Cotillo, also Fuerteventura, on 20 March. The **Red-throated Pipits** *Anthus cervinus* at Amarilla Golf remained throughout

February. A **Brown-necked Raven** *Corvus ruficollis* was at Pajara, Fuerteventura on 22 March (all TC).

Cape Verde Islands

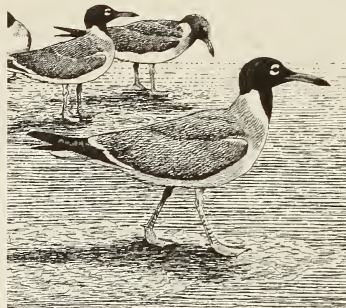
An adult **White-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon lepturus* at Ilhéu de Curral Velho, Boavista on 20 February, was the first for the Cape Verdes and apparently the first record for the Western Palearctic. On 27 February, 140 **Fea's Petrels** *Pterodroma feae* flew past Vila da Ribeira Grande, Santo Antão. In the Sal Rei/Rabil lagoon area, Boavista a male **Magnificent Frigatebird** *Fregata magnificens* was seen on 21 February and a pair on 5 March. Dark morph **Western Reef Herons** *Egretta gularis* were seen on São Vicente from 19 January–14 March at least, at Baía da Gata, Boavista on 21 February, and at Praia, Santiago on 11 March. A **Great White Egret** *Egretta alba*, possibly of the sub-Saharan subspecies *melanorhynchos*, photographed at Rabil lagoon, Boavista on 9 March, constitutes the first for the Cape Verdes. The first **Lesser Scaups** *Aythya affinis* for the islands—three females—were found at Mindelo, São Vicente on 24 February (TC). Nine **Common Teal** *Anas crecca* on São Vicente on 22–27 January constituted the fourth record for the Cape Verdes (*Dutch Birding* 21: 53). Adult **Peregrine Falcons** *Falco peregrinus madens* were seen near Praia harbour, Santiago on 23 February and at Tarrafal, São Nicolau on 4 March. The first **Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus* since 1969 and the first for São Vicente was at Mindelo on 1–2 March. Two **Oystercatchers** *Haematopus ostralegus* present at Porto Grande, São Vicente from 3–14 March at least, constitute the seventh record for the Cape Verdes. A **Semipalmated Plover** *Charadrius semipalmatus* at Mindelo, São Vicente on 27 February, and another at Pedra de Lume, Sal on 6 March, constitute the first and second for the archipelago. Two **Little Ringed Plovers** *Charadrius dubius* were on Santiago on 6 March (10th record for the Cape Verdes). An **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica*, the fifth for the islands, was seen at São Vicente on 22 January and from 24 February to 13–14 March at least, when it had been joined by a second individual. A **Northern Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus* between Rabil and Povoação Velha, Boavista on 2 February was the second for the Cape Verdes and the first for Boa Vista. The fifth **Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* for the Cape

Verdes was present at Mindelo, São Vicente from 22 January–2 March. Two **Eurasian Curlews** *Numenius arquata* near Curral Velho on 20 February was the fourth record for the Cape Verdes and the first for Boavista. A **Semipalmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla* at Rabil lagoon, Boavista on 2 March constitutes yet another first for the islands. The sixth **Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* for the Cape Verdes was seen at Boa Entrada, Santiago on 8 March, whereas the fifth **Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus* stayed at the sewage farm of São Vicente from 22 January–14 March. The first **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia* for the Cape Verdes was recorded at Mindelo, São Vicente on 24 February; on 28 February there were two, one of which was still present on 2 March. Three immature **Yellow-legged Gulls** *Larus cachinnans* were at Rabil lagoon and Sal Rei, Boavista on 5–8 March, and an adult of the race *atlantis* was identified at Tarrafal, São Nicolau on 17 March. The third **Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* for the Cape Verdes stayed at Rabil lagoon, Boavista from 21 February–9 March at least, while the fourth was seen off Raso on 5 March and the fifth at Mindelo, São Vicente on 13–14 March. Two **White Wagtails** *Motacilla alba* were seen on Santiago on 7 March (sixth record for the Cape Verdes). Three **Red-throated Pipits** *Anthus cervinus* (third record for the Cape Verdes) present since January had increased to four on 13–14 March. A **Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* was spotted between Rabil and Joao Galego, Boavista on 6 March (TC).

Egypt

A Long-tailed Cormorant

Phalacrocorax africanus seen at Abu Simbel on 9 April constitutes the fifth record for the Palearctic this century (BB per *Birding World* 12: 146). A **Sakar Falcon** *Falco cherrug* was recorded south of Safaga on 18 March. A **Long-toed Stint** *Calidris subminuta* found north of Ismailiya on 6 March and an adult winter **Grey-headed Gull** *Larus cirrocephalus* seen at Nabq, South Sinai on 7 February constitute first records for Egypt. At least 15 **Northern Gannets** *Sula bassana* were at Zaranikh, North Sinai on 7 March, along with two **Audouin's Gulls** *Larus audouinii*. Along with **Armenian Gulls** *Larus armenicus*, a common winter visitor at Ain Sukhna, were at least three adult and one juvenile **Heuglin's Gull** *Larus heuglini*, on 14 March; this species is probably over-



White-eyed Gulls *Larus leucophthalmus* by Craig Robson (courtesy of BirdQuest)

looked and may be a fairly regular winter visitor or passage migrant. At least 19 **White-tailed Plovers** *Vanellus leucurus* were found at Abassa on 15 February. A **Syrian Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos syriacus* was sighted at El Arish, North Sinai on 7 November 1998; this is the westernmost record for the country to date. At least three pairs of **African Pied Wagtails** *Motacilla alpinum* were at Abu Simbel in January. Ten **Wood Larks** *Lullula arborea* and a **Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* were found at El Arish on 8 March (MCSBD, JE, US & AC). A **Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni* was at Sharm el Sheikh on 22 April and a **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* and at least two **Upcher's Warblers** *Hippolais languida* also there on 22–23 April (BB per *Birding World* 12: 146).

A survey of 45 of the estimated 66 islands and islets between Hurghada and the southern Gulf of Suez, conducted from 4–8 July 1998, found 2,151 pairs of **White-eyed Gull** *Larus leucophthalmus* with the population for the whole area now estimated to be c3,000 pairs, a 50% increase since 1983–84 and representing c30% of the world population. **Swift Tern** *Sterna bergii* was present with 150 pairs, which is more than previously thought; breeding was first confirmed in 1997. Three pairs of **Little Tern** *Sterna albibrons* were found nest scraping and displaying; this is the first breeding evidence for the species in this area. Only nine pairs of **Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* were found nesting, compared to an estimated 20 pairs in 1983–84, so this species is probably declining. Other breeding birds included **Red-billed Tropicbird** *Phaethon aethereus* (evidence of breeding at five sites), **Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster* (78 active nests), **Osprey** *Pandion*

haliaetus (60 recently used nests), **Sooty Falcon** *Falco concolor* (20 pairs; the larger, more important islands for this species were not surveyed), **Sooty Gull** *Larus bemprichii* (97 pairs; c50 pairs in 1983–84), **Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* (141 pairs), **White-cheeked Tern** *Sterna repressa* (597 pairs but breeding not yet started and larger numbers present), **Lesser Crested Tern** *Sterna bengalensis* (1,307 pairs) and **Bridled Tern** *Sterna anaethetus* (345 pairs, slight increase) (AG & LM).

The Gambia

An adult **Black-bellied Whistling Duck** *Dendrocygna arborea* was at Kotu sewage ponds from 3–6 December 1998; it showed no signs of captivity and may thus be the first record for Africa. A **European Griffon Vulture** *Gyps fulvus* was seen at Basse, URD, on 13 December 1998. A confiding **African Wood Owl** *Strix woodfordii* was seen at its roost at the Abuko Nature Reserve on 7 December; this species was first recorded in the country in 1992 (SCe). The first **Solitary Sandpiper** *Tringa solitaria* for the country was photographed at Kotu sewage ponds in January (ES per *Birding World* 12: 168). A **Black-shouldered Nightjar** *Caprimulgus nigriscapularis* was reported from Tunku Creek, opposite Tendaba Camp, on at least two occasions, in November–December 1998; this would be the first for The Gambia if confirmed (*Birding World* 11: 458). An **Abdim's Stork** *Ciconia abdimii* was seen at Tendaba on 2 December 1997; this species is very rare in The Gambia (DW). Two **Saddle-billed Storks** *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis* were seen in Tunku Creek, opposite Tendaba, on 8 December 1998 (PN). Three **Savile's Bustards** *Eupodotis (ruficrista) savilei* were calling at Ndunggu Kebbeh in mid-September 1998 (BN). A **White-rumped Seedeater** *Serinus leucopygius* was seen at its nest at Tendaba on 25 February; this apparently constitutes the first proof of breeding in the country (DW).

Kenya

Records from 1998 include the following. An adult female **Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus* was ringed at Ngulia, Tsavo West in November and a juvenile male in December; these are only the second and third to have been ringed in East Africa. Three **Red-chested Flufftails** *Sarothrura rufa* were calling at two sites near Thika on 12 July and two were flushed at a different site near Thika on 29 November. A **Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla* and three **African Crakes** *Crex egregia*

were found in a seasonal swamp in the Rift Valley behind the Ngong Hills on 5 July; an adult and a juvenile **Baillon's**, one **African** and four **Striped Crakes** *Aenigmatolimnas marginalis* were there on 9 July. A **Eurasian Scops Owl** *Otus scops* was caught and ringed at Ngulia. A **Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanius minor* was seen at the Sabaki River mouth on 22 October; this species is rare during autumn migration in Kenya (Cf).

1999 yielded the following noteworthy records. A pair of **Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus* was feeding two chicks at Lake Elmenteita on 19 January; there were no breeding records for Kenya during 1979–1995 (DF). At least 5,000 **Lesser Flamingos** *Phoenicopterus minor* were at Sabaki River mouth and c150 at Gongoni salt pans north of Malindi on 21 January; there have only ever been 1–2 records of this species on the coast and never involving such large numbers (VS). Seasonal pools in and near Arabuko-Sokoke Forest held 140+ **African Pygmy Geese** *Nettion auritus* and up to ten **Southern Pochard** *Nettion erythrophthalma* on 27 January (the first record for the coast away from the Tana River Delta), and an exceptional 30+ **Allen's Gallinules** *Porphyrio alleni*; the latter is uncommon in Kenya and even more so at the coast (Cf). A **Lesser Jacana** *Micropterus capensis* was also there. Two young **Bat Hawks** *Macheirhamphus alcinus* were roosting in acacia trees at Lake Nakuru on 18 January; this species is uncommon and very local in Kenya and there are few breeding records. An adult and an immature **Eastern Imperial Eagle** *Aquila heliaca* were observed at Lake Elmenteita on 19 January (DF). A **Slender-billed Gull** *Larus genei* was

seen at Gongoni salt pans and another at Sabaki River mouth on 21 January; this species is rare on the coast (VS). An **Abyssinian Roller** *Coracias abyssinica* was near Kabarnet on 21 January (DF) and a **Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* near Nairobi International Airport on 17 January (VS). **House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus* was found to have reached Baringo town. A group of c20 **Clarke's Weaver** *Ploceus golanii*, with males in breeding plumage, was seen in Sokoke Forest on 30 January; there are few records from the December–February period (DF).

Madagascar

An aerial feeding flock of c250 **Madagascar Pratincoles** *Glarvula ocularis* near Miandrivazo on 10 January 1998 constituted a remarkably large congregation (BG).

Madeira

Three **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis*, two **White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia*, a **Booted Eagle** *Hieraetus pennatus* and a **Common Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia* were seen on Porto Santo on 18 April (NG per *Birding World* 12: 145).

Morocco

A **Short-eared Owl** *Asio flammeus* was seen at the Souss estuary on 28 November 1998 and two **Red-throated Pipits** *Anthus cervinus* were also there on 29 November 1998 (HD per *Birding World* 11: 453). A survey of **Great Bustards** *Otis tarda* found at least 90 birds in December 1998. Three **Little Bustards** *Tetrax tetrax*—two males and a female—were engaged in early stages of courtship behaviour near Asilah, northern Morocco on 11 March (BD). On 7 April, 750 **Marbled Duck** *Marmaronetta angustirostris* and 800 **Red-knobbed Coot** *Fulica cristata* were on Dayet Aoua, Ifrane. A **Tawny Eagle** *Aquila rapax* was claimed from Igoudar on 2 April (AH per *Birding World* 12: 146). A **Spanish Imperial Eagle** *Aquila adalberti* was observed at Larache in December 1998 (*Dutch Birding* 21: 54). An adult pale morph **Eleonora's Falcon** *Falco eleonora* was seen flying north-west over the desert locality of Agdz on 28 March (VS). A **Kittlitz's Plover** *Charadrius pecuarius* in non-breeding plumage was observed at Zaouit S. Salah, c50 km south-east of Zagora on 1 March (PY & TB per *Birding World* 12: 101). The first **Icelandic Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa islandica* for Africa was an individual colour-ringed in September 1998 in England and staying

at Oued Souss in January. The record of two **Purple Sandpipers** *Calidris maritima* at Essaouira on 17 January was the most southerly ever for the country (*Dutch Birding* 21: 53–54). An adult **Semipalmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla* in breeding plumage at salt pans 30 km north of Oualidia on 8 April would constitute the second for Morocco if accepted. A **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* was near Erfoud on 30 March. Two groups of **Marsh Sandpipers** *Tringa stagnatilis* of 12 and 19 birds respectively flew in from the south to rest in the Souss estuary on the evening of 6 April; this species is uncommon in Morocco. Also there was an adult **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularis* in breeding plumage on 5 April (VS). A first-winter **Ring-billed Gull** *Larus delawarensis* was at Essaouira on 1–2 March (PY & TB per *Birding World* 12: 101) and a second-winter at the Souss estuary on 5–7 April (VS). Also at the latter locality, a second-winter **Common Gull** *Larus canus* was seen on 4 March (PY & TB per *Birding World* 12: 101) and an adult on 5–7 April. Three **Long-eared Owls** *Asio otus* were perching in trees along the road near Souss estuary on 7 April; this species is unusual so far south. Two **Egyptian Nightjars** *Caprimulgus aegyptius* were discovered around midday at Merzouga on 30 March (VS) and three were there on 4–5 April (AH per *Birding World* 12: 146). A **Marsh Warbler** *Acrocephalus palustris* claimed from Ouazazate on 1–2 April would be the first record for Morocco if accepted (VS).

Namibia

An adult **Sooty Falcon** *Falco concolor* was photographed at Halali, Etosha on 23 March; this confirmed reports of the species' occurrence during the past four years and suggests that there is an as yet unknown wintering population in the north of the country (AvdB per *Dutch Birding* 21: 117–118). The second **Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra* for Namibia was seen at Mahango Game Reserve on 5 November 1998; the first was in 1925 (NR). A **Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis* was photographed at Halali, Etosha on 9–10 October 1998; this appears to constitute the second record for Namibia (DT). Photographs of a male **Ficedula flycatcher**, taken near Windhoek on 12 October 1998, were placed on the Internet and prompted lively discussions on the identity of the bird. *Ficedula* flycatchers are extremely rare winter visitors to southern Africa



Great Bustard *Otis tarda*
by Ian Lewington

and the fact that the bird was in breeding plumage is all the more remarkable. A Pied Flycatcher *F. hypoleuca* would be a first for Namibia (GL).

Nigeria

An **Ayres Hawk-Eagle** *Hieraetus (dubius) ayresii* flew over Atteh, c10 km north-west of Buru, Taraba State on 8 January 1999; there are very few records of this species in Nigeria. Several **Green-throated Sunbird** *Nectarinia rubescens* of the distinctive subspecies *crossensis* (without a green throat), were also seen there on 7–9 January; there are only three previous records for this species, which has only recently been discovered in the country (Hopkins *et al.* 1999, *Malimbus* 21: 57–60). A male **Buff-throated Sunbird** *Nectarinia adelberti* observed at Assop, on the western edge of the Jos Plateau, on 8 May constitutes the first for Plateau State (MH).

Senegal

A **Black Coucal** *Centropus grillii* was observed near Madina Djikoye, Toubacouta, just north-west of the border with The Gambia, in September 1998; previous records of this wet season visitor are from the south-east of the country (BN).

Seychelles

A remarkable fall of Palearctic migrants took place at Aldabra in the days following 24 March after stormy weather. These included five **Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio* (third record for Seychelles), five **European Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus* (sixth record), 50+ **Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*, 13 **Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata*, four **Blue-checked Bee-eater** *Merops persicus*, a **European Roller** *Coracias garrulus* and a **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava*. A **Long-tailed Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax africanus*, also present on Aldabra from 26 January to at least the end of March, is the first report of this species to be submitted to Seychelles Bird Records Committee (there are two earlier unconfirmed reports from Aldabra). An **Allen's Gallinule** *Porphyrio alleni* at Aldabra on 6 January and one at La Passe, La Digue were the second and third reports for Seychelles. Records under consideration include those of a **Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos* staying at Dauban Marsh, Silhouette from 12 December 1998–17 January and a **Common Quail** *Coturnix coturnix* on Aride Island from 25 December 1998–17 January; both species have previously been considered

only as escapes. Other notable sightings included a **Blue-checked Bee-eater** *Merops persicus* at Bird Island on 9 April and a **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* at Frégate on 16 April (all AS).

South Africa

After unusual rainfall and strong north-westerly winds, a **Dwarf Bittern** *Ixobrychus sturmii* was observed at a small pool at Twee Rivieren Rest Camp, Kalahari-Gemsbok National Park, Northern Cape on 22 September 1998. Two **Broad-billed Sandpipers** *Limicola falcinellus* were seen at Umgeni River mouth, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, on 28 and 30 September. At Timbavati Private Nature Reserve, Mpumalanga, after heavy rain and strong westerly and north-westerly winds, an **Olive-tree Warbler** *Hippolais olivetorum* was seen on 13 December 1998, a **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* on 15 December 1998 and a **Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia luscinia* on 16 December 1998 (SC).

Tanzania

Records from December 1998–January 1999 include the following. Two **Rufous-bellied Herons** *Ardeola rufiventris* and three **African Water Rails** *Rallus caenilescens* were seen in the Ngorongoro Crater on 2 January; the species is not mentioned for the park by Zimmerman *et al.* (1996). A **Bat Hawk** *Macheiramphus alcinus* was seen at Amani on 25 December; this species is rare in northern Tanzania. What appears to be the first **Greater Spotted Eagle** *Aquila clanga* for the country was encountered south of Hedara on 31 December. An immature of the rare **Taita Falcon** *Falco fasciinucha* was sighted in the West Usambaras on 28–30 December. A record of **Pangani Longclaw** *Macronyx aurantiigula* at Lake Masek, near Ndutu, on 4 January, and of two **Upcher's Warblers** *Hippolais languida* at Tarangire National Park on 7 January appear to be west of their previously known range. Rarely recorded species in northern Tanzania include **Marsh Warbler** *Acrocephalus palustris*, observed near Lushoto on 31 December and at Tarangire on 6 January, and **Olive-tree Warbler** *Hippolais olivetorum* seen on the Pare Mountain plains on 31 December (two). The critically endangered **Long-billed Apalis** *Apalis moreaui* was still found at its known site near Amani (RD & NB).

Tunisia

A trip from 12–26 December 1998 produced the following records. A

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*, photographed on the Abu Nawash Golf Course, Plage de Sidi Mahrès, Djerba on 24 December, apparently constitutes only the second record for Tunisia, the first being of a bird (either this species or *P. dominica*) shot in 1915. The total of 372 **Great Egrets** *Egretta alba*: 62 at Djerba and 310 at the Golfe de Bou Grara, is considerable compared to previously published numbers for the country. Counts of **Eurasian Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* totalled 1,257 birds, including 517 on Djerba and 629 in the Golfe de Bou Grara. An adult **Mute Swan** *Cygnus olor* flying low over Bahiret el Bilbane and landing in the lagoon on 17 December, may be the first record for Tunisia; flocks of this species have been recorded in Libya in recent years. Four female **Red-breasted Mergansers** *Mergus serrator* were at Bahiret el Bilbane on 17 December and seven more in the Golfe de Bou Grara near Gulellala on 18 December; this species is an irregular and rare winter visitor in the country. Three first-winter **Pomarine Skuas** *Stercorarius pomarinus* were flying west off Ras Tourgueness during strong north-east winds on 13 December. Six **Arctic Skuas** *Stercorarius parasiticus* were seen: two first-winter and one sub-adult light phase off Ras Tourgueness on 13 December, one off Houmt Souk on 18 December, one near Guettaïet el Baharia on 22 December, and one off Plage de Sidi Mahrès on 24 December. Some 9,000 **Slender-billed Gulls** *Larus genei* were counted, including 4,500 on Djerba and 4,050 at the Golfe de Bou Grara; five colour-ringed birds were found to originate from Italy and 15 from southern France. An adult **Lesser Crested Tern** *Sterna bengalensis* in winter plumage was present in a roosting flock of several hundred **Sandwich Terns** *Sterna sandvicensis* at Ras Lalla Hadria on 14, 23 and 25 December. What may have been the same bird was flying west off Ras Rmel on 15 December (PM).



Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*
by Mark Andrews

A record number of 1,400 **Marbled Duck** *Marmaronetta angustirostris* was found in oases around Douz on 10 March, including a flock of at least 1,000 near Blidet (WO). On 5 April, 208 were seen at a lake near Douz (CAMH). Approximately 350 **Dotterel** *Charadrius morinellus* were flying east in groups of up to 40 at Oued El Malah, near the bridge of the El Hamma–Metaoui road, at 17.30–18.30 hrs on 11 March; next day 247 were counted at the same site. Four **Ring Ouzels** *Turdus torquatus* were found in Seldja Gorge on 11 March. **Isabelline Wheatears** *Oenanthe isabellina* were recorded at Nefta and in sandy desert west of Nefta on 9 March, west of El Hamma and at Oued El Malah on 12 March (WM, DR & GPS), and near Seldja Gorge on 7 April (two) (CAMH).

Uganda

A **Sooty Falcon** *Falco concolor* was seen at Mweya Lodge, Queen Elisabeth National Park on 7 February. A **Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii* was at Kasinga Canal on 7 February and 200 **Caspian Plovers** *Charadrius asiaticus* at Murchison Falls on 15 February (GO & AD). A **Slender-billed Gull** *Larus genei* and c600 **Heuglin's Gulls** *Larus heuglini* were observed at Katwe on 8 February; the former apparently constitutes the first for the park. The first **Upcher's Warbler** *Hippolais languida* for Murchison Falls was seen on 16 February (ID).

Zambia

Interesting records from the period July–December 1998 include the following. Waterfowl counts in July produced two **Avocets** *Recurvirostra avosetta* on the upper Zambezi near Lukulu and another two on Kafue Flats where six **Slaty Egrets** *Egretta*

vinaceigula and 232 **Wattled Cranes** *Bugeranus carunculatus* were also found. Also on the flats and a little unseasonal were 28 **White Storks** *Ciconia ciconia* and 17 **Eurasian Curlews** *Numenius arquata*. A reflection of the cold weather was a wandering **Greater Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus* at Lochinvar National Park and significant numbers of **Rufous-crowned Rollers** *Coracias naevia* starting to appear. In Lower Zambezi National Park, **Ethiopian Snipe** *Gallinago nigripennis* was found drumming and some very early **Mada-gascar Bee-eaters** *Merops superciliosus* flew over Kafue on 20 July.

On 1 August a **Rüppell's Vulture** *Gyps rueppellii* was found among other vultures at a Hippopotamus *Hippopotamus amphibius* carcass in South Luangwa National Park. Although this species has been seen on a few occasions further south, this is a potential first for Zambia. A **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* was seen in the same park and a **Gull-billed Tern** *Gelocbelidon nilotica* was found in Kafue. In Mwinilunga **Angola Swallows** *Hirundo angolensis* and **Bocage's Weavers** *Ploceus temporalis* were seen at the Chitunta Plain and further south, **Pink-billed Lark** *Spizocorys conirostris* and **South African Cliff Swallow** *Hirundo spilodera* were seen at Luena Flats. More interesting records came from Mwinilunga in September when **White-spotted Flufftail** *Sarothrua pulchra* was found at a new locality. Among the large numbers of waders at Lochinvar at the end of the month was a **Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*.

In October a **Brown-chested Wattled Plover** *Vanellus superciliosus* in the Copperbelt was the first confirmed record for Zambia and another potential first was a **Shrike-Flycatcher** *Megabyas flammulatus* in northernmost Mwinilunga. This far-flung corner of the country was well explored in October–November when several species known previously from only 1–2 records were found. These included **White-bellied Kingfisher** *Alcedo leucogaster*, **Chestnut Wattle-eye** *Dyaphorophya castanea*, **Orange-tufted Sunbird** *Nectarinia bouvieri* and **Compact Weaver** *Ploceus superciliosus*. A sighting of **Grey Kestrel** *Falco ardosiaceus* in the same area joins a list of unconfirmed records for Zambia, although it now appears beyond doubt that the species occurs regularly in the country. A final interesting record from Mwinilunga is that of an **Orange-checked Waxbill**

Estrilda melpoda at the Zambezi Rapids; this species was previously only known from northern Luapula Province. In the south of the country, research continued on the **Black-checked Lovebird** *Agapornis nigrigenis* and a **European Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* was found in Kafue. At the end of November a **Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii* was found in Kafue where a **Striped Crake** *Aenigmatolimnas marginalis* was flushed in early December. At the end of the year significant numbers of **Streaky-breasted Flufftails** *Sarothrua boehmi* and three singing **River Warblers** *Locustella fluviatilis* were found in Choma and a second **Greater Spotted Eagle** *Aquila clanga* was tracked by satellite into the Luangwa Valley (all PL). ☞

Records were collated by Ron Demey from contributions supplied by Mindy & Sherif Baba El Din (M&SBD), Theo Bakker (TB), Arnold B. van den Berg (AvdB), Bryan Bland / Sunbird (BB), Nik Borrow / Birdquest (NB), Stephen Cameron (SC), Tony Clarke / Canarian Nature Tours (TC), Agnis Clemens (AC), Shaun Coyle (SCe), Ian Davidson (ID), Bob Dawson (BD), Ron Demey (RD), Adriaan Dijkse (AD), Robert J. Dousett (RJD), Françoise Dousett-Lemaire (FDL), Hugues Dufourmy (HD), Johan Elmberg (JE), David Fisher / Sunbird (DF), Brian Gee (BG), Nathan Gricks (NG), Andrew Grieve (AG), Chris, Anne & Matthew Hindle (CAMH), Angus Hogg (AH), Mark Hopkins (MH), Colin Jackson (CJ), Greg Lasley (GL), Peter Leonard (PL), Wolfgang Mädlow (WM), Peter Meininger (PM), Linda Millington (LM), Peter Nash (PN), Babacar Ndao (BN), William Oliver (WO), Gerald Ouweneel (GO), Nigel Redman / Birdquest (NR), Detlef Robel (DR), Erik Sanders (ES), Valéry Schollaert (VS), Gerd-Peter Schulze (GPS), Adrian Skerrett / Seychelles Bird Records Committee (AS), Uffe Sørensen (US), David Tomlinson (DT), David Warden (DW), Paul & Gillian Woods (P&GW), Diane Wright (DW), Pierre Yésou (PY) and from Birding World and Dutch Birding.

Contributions for Recent Reports can be sent to Ron Demey, Van der Heimstraat 52, 2582 SB Den Haag, The Netherlands and also by e-mail: 106706.603@compuserve.com



Wattled Cranes *Bugeranus carunculatus* by Mike Hodgson (courtesy of BirdQuest)



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